

Durham Research Online

Deposited in DRO:

10 June 2009

Version of attached file:

Published Version

Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Olechnowicz, A. (2007) 'Historians and the modern British monarchy.', in The monarchy and the British nation, 1780 to the present. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 6-44.

Further information on publisher's website:

<http://www.cambridge.org/catalogue/catalogue.asp?isbn=9780521844611>

Publisher's copyright statement:

© Cambridge University Press 2007

Additional information:

Use policy

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a [link](#) is made to the metadata record in DRO
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Please consult the [full DRO policy](#) for further details.

Andrzej Olechnowicz

Until the 1980s, academic historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries largely ignored the British monarchy as an object of research; David Cannadine's celebrated 1983 essay on the monarchy's 'invention of tradition' can reasonably be taken as starting the current round of scholarly interest.¹ There was no one decisive reason for this change. In part the timing reflected a run of royal events which demonstrated the immense popularity of the Royal Family: the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977, which saw street parties throughout the kingdom (6,000 in London alone, in rich and poor areas alike);² the Prince of Wales's wedding to Lady Diana Spencer in 1981, watched by an estimated world-wide television audience of 1,000 million; and comparable national and international excitement over the wedding of Prince Andrew in 1986. The monarchy manifestly commanded a range and depth of support which no political party, religion or national football team has perhaps ever matched. Such contemporary perceptions began to affect historical perspectives. As Walter Arnstein wrote, there now seemed something odd in most social historians being 'more fascinated with a small band of Lancashire woolcombers who sought to found a trade union than with the 30,000 school children who serenaded Queen Victoria at her Golden Jubilee pageant in London's Hyde Park'.³

It was no accident, however, that much of the early scholarly running was made by historians on the left. From the late 1970s onwards, national and international political events – notably the election of Mrs Thatcher's Conservative government in 1979 with a third of workers'

¹ D. Cannadine, 'The context, performance and meaning of ritual: the British monarchy and the "invention of tradition", c.1820–1977', in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 101–64.

² P. Ziegler, *Crown and People* (Newton Abbot, 1979), pp. 172–93. Cannadine had published a first version of his 1983 essay in Jubilee year: 'The not so ancient traditions of monarchy', *New Society*, 2 June 1977.

³ W. L. Arnstein, 'Queen Victoria's speeches from the throne: a new look', in A. O'Day (ed.), *Government and Institutions in the Post-1832 United Kingdom* (Lampeter, 1995), p. 131.

votes, and popular support for the 1982 Falklands War – coincided with scholarly reappraisals of British economic and social history to force a redirection in their thinking. Scepticism about the idea of the ‘Industrial Revolution’ and a new emphasis upon the long dominance of a southern ‘gentlemanly capitalism’ based around commerce, finance and services, cast doubt both on a Marxist-indebted history of the nineteenth century preoccupied with the socio-economic power of northern, industrial, bourgeois capitalism and with the activities of a labour movement, and on an orthodox Marxist view of aristocratic influence as surviving only because this was in the interests of the bourgeoisie. From the resulting reassessments, the monarchy emerged as a prime candidate in upholding anti-industrial and aristocratic values, containing class consciousness and socialism, and frustrating what these historians considered to be economic modernization (i.e. a more socialist economy), because of its role in shaping a particular kind of national identity. For example, in the 1978 Marx memorial lecture, Eric Hobsbawm explained the halt in the labour movement’s advance exclusively in socio-economic terms; but shortly afterwards he shifted to placing greater emphasis on the influence of national culture, through the processes of the ‘invention of tradition’.⁴

The most influential contribution came from the heterodox Marxist and Scottish nationalist Tom Nairn, whose *The Enchanted Glass: Britain and its Monarchy* (1988) developed his analysis in *The Break-up of Britain* (1977) of British ‘over-traditionalism leading to incurable backwardness’.⁵ With greater empirical depth, Linda Colley’s *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (1992) presented Protestant Britons defining themselves as a single people in reaction to the Catholic, ‘superstitious, militarist, decadent and unfree’ French, and identified the monarchy as central to this process: under the Hanoverians it assumed ‘many of the characteristics and much of the patriotic importance that it retains today’.⁶ Nairn and Colley have influenced each other’s work, and both were indebted to another heterodox Marxist, Arno Mayer, who in *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (1981) argued that ‘the rising business and professional classes’ had failed to replace ‘the landed and public service elites’ as Europe’s ruling classes, in large part because the European monarchies ‘remained the focus of dazzling and minutely choreographed public rituals that rekindled deep-seated royalist sentiments while simultaneously exalting and re-legitimizing the old order

⁴ E. Hobsbawm *et al.*, *The Forward March of Labour Halted?* (London, 1981), pp. 1–19; E. Hobsbawm, ‘Introduction’, in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*, pp. 1–14.

⁵ T. Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain* (London, 1977), pp. 40–2.

⁶ L. Colley, *Britons* (New Haven, 1992), pp. 6–7, 193.

as a whole'. Britain, it was argued, had been no exception, remaining a traditional society into the reign of George V.⁷

Non-Marxist historians too came to explore the same terrain, as they 'dispersed the collectivity of class into various other alliances, mainly of a cross-class nature', producing analyses centred around discourses of 'community' and the 'populism' of popular constitutionalism.⁸ Increasingly, the political realm was regarded as conditioning social identity, and inequality and exploitation largely disappeared from the academic agenda as British 'class' interests came to be seen as compatible, and 'class' relations as harmonious. A privileging of mainly political discourses also produced a new – albeit contested – periodization which ascribed a fundamental economic, political and social unity from the early seventeenth to the late nineteenth century. This emphasis on continuity saw early Victorian political history 'inverted from the familiar steady march toward representative democracy to a world where theatre and spectacle remained the prime source of political legitimation'.⁹

These two revisionist trends encouraged historians to expect a ceremonial monarchy which faced few ideological obstacles to loyalty among its subjects. Furthermore, inspired by John Pocock's notion of the United Kingdom as an 'Atlantic archipelago' and the work of early modern historians of the Scottish and Irish impact upon English politics – as well as revived political debates about devolution – historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries also began to examine the interaction of the four nations of the kingdom.¹⁰ Here too the cultural role of the monarchy seemed important in fashioning a British identity, which satisfied a majority of subjects that it respected national differences and was more than English identity writ large.

One fundamental objection to the historical study of the monarchy is that British academic historians cannot write good royal history because they tend to treat the institution with 'a certain obsequiousness'.¹¹ The real issue is actually not obsequiousness but something altogether different. Many historians have been 'conformists': in the last analysis they

⁷ A. J. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime* (New York, 1981), pp. 79, 81, 88–95, 135–9.

⁸ For a summary of this shift, see R. Price, 'Historiography, narrative, and the nineteenth century', *Journal of British Studies* 35 (1996), 221, 229–31; and for criticism, 'Roundtable. Richard Price's *British Society, 1680–1880*', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 11 (2006), 146–79.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 221–2.

¹⁰ E.g. K. Robbins, *Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 1988); H. Kearney, *The British Isles* (Cambridge, 1989).

¹¹ This was the judgement of Robert Baldcock, a history editor at Yale University Press, in 1998.

see little wrong with the monarchy or the structures of the nation. More recent work, focusing on the examination of discourses, runs the risk of a naïve reading of the materials producing a similarly congratulatory history; it has always to be remembered that discourses were not innocent descriptions of reality, but weapons in contests for some form of power.

This essay considers three broad historiographical themes. First, it discusses studies of the monarchy's constitutional role, political power and social character by reviewing the genre of royal biography, the contribution of constitutional and political historians, and changing assessments of Bagehot's classic statement of the British monarchy's role in *The English Constitution* (1867). The second section examines how historians have sought to explain the monarchy's popularity, by assessing studies of philanthropy, ceremony, gender, religion, national identity, empire, media and 'soap opera'. The third section will outline historical understandings of the character of British republicanism. The conclusion will suggest that monarchism should be considered both as a pervasive cultural fact, which often goes unremarked, and as a distinctive ideology articulated in print and other media, which needs close historical investigation.

I

The official royal biography still carries authority in defining the character of individual monarchs and their public role. Nor is the genre extinct: in 2003 the Palace chose William Shawcross to write the Queen Mother's official biography. The biographies of George V by Harold Nicolson in 1952, George VI by John Wheeler-Bennett in 1958 and Queen Mary by James Pope-Hennessy in 1959 all sought to establish that the monarchs had been exemplary individuals, who had behaved in a constitutional manner and had not been hostile to the working class and the Labour movement. In these senses, they were patrician responses to a fear not of republicanism, but of confiscatory socialism. Nicolson, the most scrupulous of the three, quoted the advice of the King's private secretary in 1917 that the monarchy should induce the thinking working classes to regard it 'as a living power for good', and emphasised that the King took special trouble in 1924 to get to know his new Labour ministers personally.¹² Wheeler-Bennett praised George VI for developing 'a new concept of Royalty . . . closely identified with the people, genuinely interested in their affairs'.¹³ Pope-Hennessy was less plausible: royal tours of mining

¹² H. Nicolson, *King George the Fifth* (London, 1952), pp. 301, 389.

¹³ J. Wheeler-Bennett, *King George VI* (London, 1958), p. 172.

and industrial areas in 1912–13 were a success because ‘the new King and Queen felt more at their ease with British working people than they ever did with members of London Society or with foreign royalties’.¹⁴

Such statements are hardly surprising given the purpose of the official royal biography, which is illuminated by Nicolson’s diaries and letters. Concerned that he might be unable to tell the whole truth, George VI’s private secretary, Sir Alan Lascelles, assured him that he would be shown ‘every scrap of paper’, but added that the book was ‘not meant to be an ordinary biography. It is something quite different. You will be writing a book on the subject of a myth and will have to be mythological.’ Nicolson would not be expected to say anything untrue, nor to praise or exaggerate, but would be expected ‘to omit things and incidents which were discreditable’. When he asked what would happen if he did find something damaging, Lascelles replied that his ‘first duty will always be to the Monarchy’. Nicolson did his duty, changing the wording of a 1914 memorandum in which George V threatened to refuse Royal Assent to the government’s Irish Home Rule Bill.¹⁵

In the 1950s these three official royal biographies were ‘almost impossible to contest’ because government and royal records remained closed to other historians. Moreover, royal insiders abided by a code of silence with anyone other than entirely friendly outsiders. The breaking of this code has been the most dramatic development of the last thirty years of commentary on the Royal Family, making possible muck-raking biographies based on unsubstantiated and unattributable gossip. The genre of popular royal biography is hardly new, but such books used to be deferential and celebratory – ‘mythological’ in exactly the same way as official royal biographies. Some were written with assistance from the royal persons concerned, for example Kathleen Woodward’s *Queen Mary: A Life and Intimate Study* and Lady Cynthia Asquith’s *The Married Life of The Duchess of York*. The unauthorized (though still reverential) book by a royal governess, Marion Crawford’s *The Little Princesses* (1950), conventionally marks the shift towards a more revelatory style. So far Kitty Kelley’s *The Royals* (1997) represents the acme of this genre, using interviews with many ‘current or former members of the royal household’ to claim exposures of the Windsors’ ‘secrets of alcoholism, drug addiction, epilepsy, insanity, homosexuality, bisexuality, adultery, infidelity, and illegitimacy’, and ‘their relationship with the Third Reich’.¹⁶

¹⁴ J. Pope-Hennessy, *Queen Mary 1867–1953* (London, 1959), p. 473.

¹⁵ H. Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters, 1930–64*, ed. S. Olson (Harmondsworth, 1984), pp. 334, 343; P. Hall, *Royal Fortune* (London, 1992), p. 175, and see p. 173 for Nicolson’s son avoiding the sensitive word ‘mythological’ in his own earlier edition of the diary.

¹⁶ K. Kelley, *The Royals* (New York, 1997), pp. xii, 2–3; also 23–4 which broke one of the last taboos, criticism of the Queen Mother.

Historians rightly attacked Kelley's book for its tendentiousness.¹⁷ But it raises the question of how historians studying the contemporary monarchy should approach such popular royal biographies. One strategy would be to ignore them. Another might be to treat them as texts involved in the construction of cultural understandings of royal life; what then becomes important is not their truth or falsity, but the tropes in which they present the Royal Family. But a critical and cautious engagement with their claims seems the most professional approach, especially since the much-disputed revelations in Andrew Morton's *Diana: Her True Story* (1992) proved to be accurate, and published with the Princess of Wales's approval. At the very least they can provide some corrective to the continuing flow of respectful semi-official biographies and studies, many using a very selective history of the House of Windsor.¹⁸

The present position makes the work of the official royal biographer unenviable. Philip Ziegler's *King Edward VIII: The Official Biography* (1990) was fortunate both in dealing with a figure cut off by the rest of the Royal Family – so his shortcomings could only reflect well on it – and in that the ground had been so well prepared by Frances Donaldson's well-documented biography in 1974.¹⁹ Ziegler was therefore the first official biographer not to approach his task in terms of a 'mythological' narrative (though he still dutifully considered that his predecessors had 'demonstrated that it is possible to be "official" without being ponderously decorous or slavishly discreet').²⁰ Shawcross will have to prove whether an official life can still carry any authority in an age of 'openness'.²¹ It is likely that the genre of royal biography that historians will continue to find most useful is that described by Cannadine as 'unofficial and non-commissioned, but sometimes with approved access to the royal archives'.²² In biographies by Kenneth Rose and Sarah Bradford as well as Donaldson, historians have authoritative and sufficiently frank lives of the previous three monarchs,²³ though not yet for Victoria and Edward VII.

¹⁷ Ben Pimlott in *Guardian*, 18 Sep. 1997; D. Cannadine, *History in Our Own Times* (New Haven, 1998), p. 6.

¹⁸ E.g. E. Longford, *The Royal House of Windsor* (London, 1974); R. Lacey, *Majesty* (London, 1977); J. Dimbleby, *Prince Charles* (London, 1994).

¹⁹ F. Donaldson, *Edward VIII* (London, 1974). He was singular also in that he published his memoirs, though these are disappointingly conventional on the extent of royal powers and are primarily, and misleadingly, self-justificatory: *The Duke of Windsor, A King's Story* (London, 1951).

²⁰ P. Ziegler, *King Edward VIII* (London, 1990), p. xii.

²¹ It may, however, be noted that Shawcross left his original publisher, Penguin, because they published Paul Burrell's *A Royal Duty*: *Guardian*, 7 Jan. 2004.

²² D. Cannadine, 'From biography to history: writing the modern British monarchy', *Historical Research* 77 (2004), 297.

²³ K. Rose, *King George V* (London, 1983); S. Bradford, *King George VI* (London, 1989). But this style of book is no guarantee against mythologizing; Robert Rhodes James's study of George VI stated that 'he had no prejudices': *A Spirit Undaunted* (London, 1998), p. 344.

Constitutional historians and lawyers share with official royal biographers an emphasis on the constitutional propriety of monarchs in a state 'headed by a sovereign who reigns but does not rule'.²⁴ Since the British constitution depends upon much conventional custom and practice, they have to adopt the historian's approach of analyzing the working of institutions over time and considering moments of conflict or tension²⁵ – though usually without extensive historical research, and often relying on official royal biographies for their understanding of particular political episodes. A common and long-standing view is that Queen Victoria – albeit against her will, in some versions – was the first constitutional monarch, and that her successors 'all sought to reign according to the fundamental precepts of constitutional monarchy as laid down by Bagehot'.²⁶ The fundamental trope is the substitution of influence for power.²⁷ The monarch was obliged to act on ministerial advice, a convention which over time altered in function from protecting the people from royal power to shielding the monarch from partisan criticism about ministerial decisions. Nonetheless, 'under normal conditions' the monarch held Bagehot's three rights or, in Rodney Brazier's reformulation, five rights – 'to be informed, to be consulted, to advise, to encourage and to warn'.²⁸ But exceptionally, when a government ends or a prime minister requests a dissolution of Parliament, the monarch has no ministerial advice and so is not bound by these conventions. The monarch also 'has the right (some would say duty) to exercise . . . discretion to ensure that the values which lie at the foundation of a constitutional system are preserved', and can do so by using the 'reserve powers' of insisting on a dissolution, dismissing ministers or refusing the Royal Assent. Vernon Bogdanor argues that this was how George V understood his duty during the Irish Home Rule crisis of 1911–14.²⁹

Many constitutional writers find it unremarkable that the authoritative statements of constitutional rules consist of what Bagehot simply made up, what authorities like Anson or Jennings considered was the case, or what a monarch's private secretary wrote in a letter to *The*

²⁴ V. Bogdanor, 'The monarchy and the constitution', *Parliamentary Affairs* 49 (1996), 407.

²⁵ E.g. R. Brazier, *Constitutional Reform* (Oxford, 1998) and *Constitutional Practice* (Oxford, 1999).

²⁶ V. Bogdanor, *The Monarchy and the Constitution* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 40–1.

²⁷ E.g. *ibid.*, p. 34; R. Brazier, 'The monarchy', in V. Bogdanor (ed.), *The British Constitution in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 2003), p. 76.

²⁸ E. Barendt, *An Introduction to Constitutional Law* (Oxford, 1998), p. 112; Bogdanor, 'Monarchy', pp. 414, 416; Brazier, 'Monarchy', pp. 75–8.

²⁹ Bogdanor, 'Monarchy', 413; Bogdanor, *Monarchy*, p. 65; Brazier, 'Monarchy', pp. 81–3.

Times.³⁰ The more fundamental issue is that such writers regard the conventions about the monarch's personal prerogatives as sufficiently clear not to compromise the principle that the monarch must remain neutral in a party political sense. Other writers have been less sure. Peter Hennessy found in the 1990s that the four officials who interpret constitutional conventions – the cabinet secretary, the clerk of the House of Commons, the Queen's private secretary, and the prime minister's principal private secretary – hold the view that 'if you have an unwritten constitution, you make it up as you go along'.³¹

As Robert Colls has put it, 'we have been asked to trust a constitution almost indistinguishable from the ascribed personality of the men we have invited to govern us'. For him it is the pervasive culture of 'state secrecy' which allows conventions to be interpreted in this way.³² Yet such criticisms do not figure in traditional institutional approaches, which simply note that it is 'a fundamental condition of royal influence that it remains private' in order to safeguard the monarch's strict neutrality in public.³³ This culture's wider impact is unstudied, except in the area of royal finances. Philip Hall, though denied access to relevant royal and Treasury files, tenaciously followed clues in parliamentary debates, private papers and the National Archives to produce a long history of royal tax avoidance and transfer of public money into the monarch's private funds. The secrecy surrounding these transactions meant that official guides to the monarchy presented false information; and Hall further establishes that this secrecy was the product of collusion by the various layers of the political establishment, from royal advisers and civil servants to Chancellors of the Exchequer of all political parties who failed to report new arrangements to Parliament or misled MPs into believing that recent practices had always existed.³⁴

Recent political historians interested in the modern monarchy have been especially drawn to Queen Victoria's reign. They have generally agreed that she regarded herself neither as neutral, nor as bound in normal circumstances by ministerial advice. Cannadine has argued that the

³⁰ See D. Cannadine's review of Bogdanor's *Monarchy*, in *Times Literary Supplement*, 3 Nov. 1995; and for *Times* letters, P. Hennessy, 'Searching for the "great ghost": the Palace, the premiership, the Cabinet and the constitution in the post-war period', *Journal of Contemporary History* 30 (1995), 222, and Bogdanor, *Monarchy*, p. 71.

³¹ Hennessy, 'Searching', 213; and for earlier doubts see H. J. Laski, *Parliamentary Government in England* (London, 1938), ch. 8.

³² R. Colls, 'The constitution and the English', *History Workshop Journal* 46 (1998), 100.

³³ Bogdanor, 'Monarchy', 417–9. Yet secrecy has generated royal conspiracy theories, collected in L. Picknett, C. Prince, S. Prior and R. Brydon, *War of the Windsors* (Edinburgh, 2002).

³⁴ Hall, *Royal Fortune*, pp. ix–xxi, 13–7, 34–6, 40, 52–62, 113–14.

Queen's Hanoverian influences and temperament together with Prince Albert's backward-looking concept of monarchical power meant that in the early decades of her reign the Queen attempted to reassert royal political power.³⁵ Some have noted the Queen's close interest in foreign policy, and argued that here she could exercise power through her contacts with her continental royal relatives.³⁶ Miles Taylor has recently shown that in imperial affairs too, the Queen, by communicating directly with governors, generals and Indian princes, exercised 'a considerable sway of personal influence'; it seems indicative that even before the 1876 Royal Titles Act, the Queen referred to herself as 'Empress' of India.³⁷ Moreover, Richard Williams has demonstrated that Victorian newspapers reveal no widespread sense of a politically neutral monarchy, and that on occasion – including over the Royal Titles Act – there was much public criticism of 'unconstitutional' ambitions.³⁸ In fact, it is clear that public awareness of the Queen's partisanship and political interventions fell short of the reality. It has long been known, from the Queen's letters published between 1907 and 1932, that she loathed and obstructed Gladstone, in practice exercising a 'right to instruct, to abuse, and to hector'.³⁹ The Queen was protected by the culture of secrecy, and the reticence of the politicians and her private secretaries. Gladstone, despite considerable ill-treatment, 'shielded the Queen from the consequences of her actions'.⁴⁰ One private secretary, Henry Ponsonby, noted that his tasks included translating the 'first violent reactions of the human being' into 'the cautious disapproval of the sovereign'.⁴¹ The monarch's private secretaries were evidently of considerable political importance, but like other members of the court they have received little study. Kim Reynolds's study of the Queen's female household – with its conclusion that it played a role in 'reinforcing the Queen's political prejudices' – is the only thorough study of any part of her court.⁴²

³⁵ D. Cannadine, 'The last Hanoverian sovereign?: the Victorian monarchy in historical perspective, 1688–1988', in A. L. Beier, D. Cannadine and J. M. Rosenheim (eds.), *The First Modern Society* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 127–65.

³⁶ B. Harrison, *The Transformation of British Politics, 1860–1995* (Oxford, 1996), p. 50, and see e.g. R. R. McLean, 'Kaiser Wilhelm II and the British Royal Family: Anglo-German dynastic relations in political context, 1890–1914', *History* 86 (2001), 478–502; K. Urbach, 'Prince Albert and Lord Palmerston: a battle royal' (unpublished paper).

³⁷ M. Taylor, 'Queen Victoria and India, 1837–61', *Victorian Studies* 46 (2004), 266, 272.

³⁸ R. Williams, *The Contentious Crown* (Aldershot, 1997).

³⁹ H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone, 1875–98* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 260, 259–64.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

⁴¹ A. Ponsonby, *Henry Ponsonby* (London, 1942), p. 174.

⁴² K. D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 190–217.

Was it, as Cannadine suggested, just bad Hanoverian blood that motivated the Queen to attempt to behave as an 'unconstitutional' monarch? It has been argued that she had a firm sense of the constitution as balanced between 'a monarchic, an aristocratical, and a democratic element', and of her duty to preserve this balance.⁴³ It seems clear that some politicians played on her beliefs for their own party purposes with, for example, Disraeli in 1868 and Salisbury in 1886 emphasizing her right to dissolve Parliament. She also appears to have believed that her temporal powers were a 'gift of God', and this sense of divine ordination certainly meant that she was very serious and active in her further role as governor of the Church of England.⁴⁴ Brian Harrison has suggested that her reiterated phrase 'my people' reflected a sense of personal responsibility for the national welfare.⁴⁵ Arnstein has noted that she was by temperament a 'warrior queen', regarding herself as a soldier's child, taking close interest in military matters, and decreeing a military funeral for herself.⁴⁶ That the Queen received large numbers of petitions – 800 a year in the 1850s – has been presented as evidence of a popular belief in a governing monarchy,⁴⁷ but it may also explain why she felt she understood the temper of the country. Historians need to understand her self-image more precisely, and assess if and how it shaped her understanding of her political responsibilities.

Yet there remains a need for caution over the effectiveness of Queen Victoria's political impact. Close study of particular episodes has found her more flexible towards political realities than rigid about her prerogatives. Particularly given the fluidity in the political system between 1851 and 1859, it is perhaps less surprising that the Queen and Prince Albert were tempted to pursue royal government, than that it advanced so little. It is evident that the Queen appreciated that she had limited room for manoeuvre: her power of dissolving Parliament could be used only in 'extreme cases and with a certainty of success', because 'to use this instrument and be defeated is a thing most lowering to the Crown and hurtful

⁴³ G. H. L. Le May, *The Victorian Constitution* (London, 1979), pp. 2, 93; F. Prochaska, *The Republic of Britain, 1760–2000* (London, 2000), p. 136.

⁴⁴ E. Longford, *Victoria R.I.* (London, 1966), pp. 711–2; G. I. T. Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain, 1869–1921* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 22, 70, 209; D. W. R. Bahlman, 'The Queen, Mr. Gladstone and church patronage', *Victorian Studies* 3 (1960), 349–80; Bahlman, 'Politics and church patronage in the Victoria age', *Victorian Studies* 22 (1979), 253–96.

⁴⁵ C. Ford and B. Harrison, *A Hundred Years Ago* (London, 1994), p. 267.

⁴⁶ W. L. Arnstein, 'The warrior queen: reflections on Victoria and her world', *Albion* 30 (1998), 1–28; Arnstein, *Queen Victoria* (Basingstoke, 2003), pp. 200–1.

⁴⁷ D. M. Craig, 'The crowned republic? Monarchy and anti-monarchy in Britain, 1760–1901', *Historical Journal* 46 (2003), 177.

to the country'.⁴⁸ It is also difficult to see that the Victorian monarchy ever had a decisive and independent influence on the course of foreign policy; Karina Urbach points out that Palmerston prevailed against Albert on almost every issue.⁴⁹ Similarly in imperial affairs, the scope for royal intervention declined as Liberal policy reduced Crown patronage and the army was reformed. For Taylor, the 1876 formal adoption of the title 'Empress of India' ironically marks the moment when 'most of Victoria's imperial powers – both formal and real – had been reduced or removed'.⁵⁰ After the 1884 third Reform Act, although there was 'an increasing awareness of Victoria's partisanship' there were also 'no widely-held fears that it could be used to subvert the course of parliamentary politics'.⁵¹ In practice the Queen feared being dragged publicly into partisan positions which might provoke questions about the monarchy's existence; so whatever her class sympathies or private convictions, she sought compromise and under pressure would offer arbitration. The monarchy has found survival in hedging and trimming.

Consequently, similar caution is needed with her successors. The journalist and biographer Simon Heffer, who used material in the Royal Archives, has argued that Edward VII's reign 'saw the last wholesale exercise of true political power in the Sovereign through the King's initiative in international alliances and his *de facto* control over the reform of the army'. He certainly pinpointed areas where the King took an interest and had some impact, such as honours or appointments in the diplomatic corps.⁵² What Heffer will not entertain is the conventional but also well-documented view that Edward VII lacked the diligence and drive to be a consistently significant political player. Moreover, the diplomatic historian Roderick McLean doubts whether any change in the stance of the British monarchy 'was a decisive factor in the political estrangement between London and Berlin before 1914'. What McLean's work does suggest is a need for systematic investigation of foreign governments' understandings of the British monarchy's political influence: it appears that in July 1914 the Kaiser believed that 'Britain would not go to war against Germany because George V would not allow the British government to intervene'.⁵³

⁴⁸ Victoria to Russell, 16 Jul. 1846, in W. C. Costin and J. S. Watson, *The Law and Working of the Constitution*, II (London, 1952), p. 393.

⁴⁹ Urbach, 'Albert and Palmerston'.

⁵⁰ M. Taylor, 'The imperial crown: the monarchy and the British Empire, 1801–76' (unpublished paper).

⁵¹ Williams, *Contentious Crown*, p. 116.

⁵² S. Heffer, *Power and Place. The Political Consequences of Edward VII* (London, 1999), pp. 2, 88, 94.

⁵³ McLean, 'Wilhelm and the British Royal Family', 487, 502.

On balance, the preoccupation with identifying the first constitutional monarch and with assessing the continuing scope of prerogative powers should be abandoned as unproductive and reductionist in a system where ultimately 'the British Constitution is what happens next'.⁵⁴ The prerogatives that remained were the ones that the monarchy could politically get away with. The monarchy should be seen as simply one – and in this period very rarely if ever the most important – of several institutions within the process of government, responding to the political possibilities opened up by party competition and by public reaction, concerned first and foremost to ensure its own continuance.

For the monarchy, this often meant seeking compromise and an arbitrating role when conflict broke out between the parties or within the realm.⁵⁵ The historian of British inter-party conferences notes this royal role in 1868–9 over the Irish Church question, in 1884 over the Reform Bill, in 1906 over the Education Bill, in 1910 over the finance and Parliament Bills, in 1913–14 over Irish Home Rule, in 1916 over the breakup of the Asquith coalition, in 1921 over the opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament, and in 1931 over the creation of the National Government.⁵⁶ Assessments of the effectiveness and prudence of royal arbitration have varied sharply. Bogdanor believes that the instincts of Edward VII and George V were correct in the crises of 1910–14. Colin Matthew is more critical, and argues that George V 'leaned too far towards the Unionists'.⁵⁷ Harrison sees George V's actions in 1931 being endorsed by voters in the following general election, but Ross McKibbin suggests that his behaviour was 'hardly prudent'.⁵⁸

McKibbin maintains that the arbitrating role extended beyond politics to class interests: the monarchy became 'apparently . . . the even-handed guarantor of the class-neutrality of Parliament', ensuring that the rules of the game were followed. This, he argues, was acceptable to all classes: 'to the politically strong because the Crown undoubtedly represented a conservative force; to the politically weak because they, more than any, had an interest in seeing that the rules *were* followed'. He notes that even the language of the monarchy became 'engrossed by the stylised vocabulary of "fairness"'.⁵⁹ Harrison detects a still broader royal 'class-reconciling

⁵⁴ Hennessy, 'Searching', 227. ⁵⁵ Harrison, *Transformation*, p. 50.

⁵⁶ J. D. Fair, *British Interparty Conferences* (Oxford, 1980); B. Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom* (Oxford, 1982), p. 351.

⁵⁷ Bogdanor, *Monarchy*, pp. 113–35; H. C. G. Matthew, 'Edward VII' and 'George V', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online edition), hereafter *ODNBO*.

⁵⁸ Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 351; R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 5–6.

⁵⁹ McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 18–9.

role', integrating first the radical middle class in the nineteenth and then the organised working class in the twentieth century.⁶⁰

The distribution of honours is considered important in establishing this new role (as are royal philanthropy and ceremony, considered in the next section). Their scope and frequency was extended, with fourteen new or enlarged orders of chivalry under Victoria, and the introduction in 1888 of 'New Year honours' and 'birthday honours'.⁶¹ Although the system reinforced the class hierarchy through its numerous gradations, honours came to be accepted by members of the working class because, argues McKibbin, 'for most of the recipients no class was involved; they were a class-neutral representation of the idea of the nation'.⁶² Moreover in 1917, with the creation of the Order of the British Empire, the Palace established an 'all ranks' list, with awards going to workers. However, it is worth remembering that honours could spark sectional resentments or be accepted in bad faith. Harrison sensibly adds the qualifications that the monarchy's 'healing role' has not been crucial in any areas of potential division in society, and 'it can help to unify only if it works with the grain of opinion'.⁶³ In other words, the monarchy can reflect and entrench integration, but not cause it.

One reason why the monarchy's class-reconciling role has been limited may be because of its 'less publicized role' as head of the establishment, inextricably bound to the aristocracy.⁶⁴ This was a favoured theme for Victorian and Edwardian republicans,⁶⁵ and in some senses the link continued to evolve. In the late nineteenth century there was a congruence of interest between the court and an increasingly Conservative aristocracy, as the number of peers increased and court appointments were used as 'a fertile source of political patronage'.⁶⁶ The post-war disappearance of European monarchies meant that the Royal Family had to turn to British aristocrats for marriage partners, and in contrast to his grandmother's criticisms of the native aristocracy or his father's cosmopolitanism,⁶⁷ George V epitomized the Norfolk squirearchy. Moreover, in the appointment of courtiers, "Old Corruption" did not merely linger: it positively

⁶⁰ Harrison, *Transformation*, pp. 334–5.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 334; Ford and Harrison, *Hundred Years*, p. 263.

⁶² McKibbin, *Ideologies*, pp. 19–20. ⁶³ Harrison, *Transformation*, p. 337.

⁶⁴ K. Martin, *The Crown and the Establishment* (Harmondsworth, 1963), p. 81.

⁶⁵ A. Taylor, *Down with the Crown* (London, 1999), p. 199; Taylor, "Pig-sticking princes": royal hunting, moral outrage, and the republican opposition to animal abuse in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain', *History* 84 (2004), 30–48.

⁶⁶ H. C. G. Matthew, 'Public life and politics', in Matthew (ed.), *The Nineteenth Century, 1815–1901* (Oxford, 2000), p. 123.

⁶⁷ Longford, *Victoria*, p. 441; D. Thompson, *Queen Victoria: Gender and Power* (London, 1990), p. 41; K. Urbach, 'Diplomatic history since the cultural turn', *Historical Journal* 46 (2003), 991.

thrived', numbers growing with the multiplication of junior royal households. Cannadine judges that 'most of these courtiers were obscurantist and reactionary in the extreme', with a hierarchical and 'thoroughly Tory' vision of society they shared with George V.⁶⁸ McKibbin sees these attitudes continuing in the reigns of Edward VIII and George VI, dismissing the former's embracing of American glamour as a 'trivial revolt'.⁶⁹

Harrison, on the other hand, has argued that from the early years of Victoria's reign the monarchy remained distanced from the aristocracy, which explains why in the twentieth century 'the first was left standing amidst the ruins of the second'. Victoria embraced some middle-class values, and 'London society' was continually diluted and extended by the admission of successive groups of newcomers.⁷⁰ So for Beatrice Webb, 'society' in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was 'a shifting mass of miscellaneous and uncertain membership . . . a body that could be defined, not by its circumference, which could not be traced, but by its centre or centres' – the court, the cabinet, the racing set and 'a mysterious group of millionaire financiers'.⁷¹ The fact of dilution is undeniable, but its consequences are debatable. The aristocracy remained part of 'society', and plutocracy is no more 'classless' than democracy. Monarchy was left standing because the political system shielded it with a thoroughness it was not prepared to extend to the aristocracy.

Historians have also assessed how well royal education has prepared monarchs for their political and ceremonial role. Peter Gordon and Dennis Lawton judge that 'no previous monarch had been so systematically educated on British lines as Victoria', yet in contrast no subsequent monarch (or current heir) has been anywhere near adequately educated.⁷² McKibbin argues that the most striking feature of the education of George V, Edward VIII and George VI was its 'aimlessness' and narrowness, leaving them with 'the cultural and educational attitudes

⁶⁸ D. Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven, 1990), pp. 244–5, 249, 304–7.

⁶⁹ McKibbin, *Classes*, pp. 4–6. Against the claims in Rhodes James, *Spirit Undaunted*, pp. 277, 285–6, that George VI was a 'progressive liberal' at ease with the Labour government, see *The Duff Cooper Diaries, 1915–1951*, ed. J. J. Norwich (London, 2005), p. 453, for the King's 'most outspoken' criticism of his ministers: 'he seems to hate and despise them'.

⁷⁰ Harrison, *Transformation*, pp. 332–4. See also N. W. Ellenberger, 'The transformation of London "society" at the end of Victoria's reign: evidence from the court presentation records', *Albion* 22 (1990), 633–53.

⁷¹ B. Webb, *My Apprenticeship* (1926; Cambridge, 1979), pp. 47–53.

⁷² P. Gordon and D. Lawton, *Royal Education* (London, 1999), though see Matthew 'George V' for a more positive assessment of George V's own education and that of his sons. Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret, however, were especially badly served: S. Bradford, *Elizabeth* (London, 1996), pp. 40–1, and idem., 'Princess Margaret Rose', *ODNBO*.

of landed-gentry-with-military-connections'.⁷³ What these authors also recognize, however, is the difficulty in deciding what is an appropriate royal education. The royal role is also about temperament, as Edward VIII's short reign demonstrated.⁷⁴ What historians should also consider is the impact of the 'normal', daily course of royal life on the monarchy. There is no single adequate work on this,⁷⁵ though glimpses of the extraordinary nature of his life are offered by biographies and memoirs.⁷⁶ Just as Jeffrey Auerbach has argued that 'imperial boredom', monotony, and melancholy pervaded the lives of British imperial administrators,⁷⁷ so the monarchy should be explored in terms of 'royal boredom' in the face of the restrictions of royal life. One response was typified by George V: over-compensation through obsessive concern with the accuracy of the game book or of dress.⁷⁸ Another was Edward VIII's selective and superficial revolt against 'my father's slowly turning wheel of habit, leading him year after year in unchanging rotation from one Royal residence to another and from one Royal pursuit to another'.⁷⁹

II

Bagehot's *The English Constitution* has had an enduring influence on writing about the British monarchy, and several approaches to its significance can be found. In royal biographies, it has automatically been treated as authoritative. Some historians have been interested in whether it was an accurate account of the monarchy's role in the 1860s, or only became so later: most commonly it is judged incorrect for the 1860s because Bagehot lacked 'inside political knowledge' and underestimated the importance of party government, but correct for George V's reign.⁸⁰ Prochaska has dismissed Bagehot as turning 'some fine, misleading phrases, which have besotted monarchists and constitutional writers ever since', but lacking genuine insight into the extent of the 'efficient' role of the monarchy in civil society through royal philanthropy. Bagehot as a political journalist was 'little attuned to social issues or the problems of the poor'.⁸¹ Marxist

⁷³ McKibbin, *Classes*, pp. 3–4.

⁷⁴ Ziegler, *Edward VIII*, p. 386, judges that failure to take advice was 'at the heart of the Duke's problems'.

⁷⁵ Several books describe the royal household's structure, but give little sense of how it works on a daily basis: e.g. J. Glasheen, *The Secret People of the Palaces* (London, 1998); B. Hoey, *All the Queen's Men* (London, 1992).

⁷⁶ E.g. *Louisa: Lady in Waiting*, ed. E. Longford (London, 1979); Lord E. Pelham-Clinton, *Life at the Court of Queen Victoria, 1861–1901*, ed. B. St. John Nevill (Stroud, 1997).

⁷⁷ J. Auerbach, 'Imperial boredom', *Common Knowledge* 11 (2005), 284–6.

⁷⁸ Rose, *George V*, p. 40; Matthew, 'George V'.

⁷⁹ Duke of Windsor, *King's Story*, p. 283. ⁸⁰ Harrison, *Transformation*, p. 52.

⁸¹ F. Prochaska, *Royal Bounty* (New Haven, 1995), p. 101.

historians believe that his book is best regarded as giving 'the middle classes an apologia for the aristocratic parts of the Constitution in the best of bourgeois terms', or a 'self-congratulatory myth' of a modern 'disguised republic', which provided the middle class with 'an alibi for not bothering to think farther' about the monarchy.⁸² Conservative historians have interpreted Bagehot's condescending view that the common people were 'stupid' as meaning that he believed they had 'a certain sane common sense'.⁸³ In another approach he is an early political scientist formulating a rudimentary but testable notion of the popular 'deference' which underpinned the political system.⁸⁴ In contrast Richard Crossman stood Bagehot's view of deference on its head, suggesting that 'the secret of our political stability is the deferential attitude of our rulers'.⁸⁵ More recently, several writers have sought evidence in various periods for Bagehot's view that the 'immense majority' of Victoria's subjects 'will say she rules by "God's grace"'.⁸⁶

Most of these approaches assume that some parts of Bagehot's analysis of the monarchy are relevant for the present day, and that the scholar's task is to identify which ones. None is primarily interested in contextualizing it in relation to Bagehot's other writings and Victorian public debates. By contrast, this has been the objective of intellectual historians and the editors of two recent editions of *The English Constitution*. These have argued that it must be relocated within the parliamentary reform debates from the later 1850s, and that it is best understood as a comparative study of parliamentary and presidential government.⁸⁷ Bagehot's rejection of the theories of mixed government, separation of powers and unconstitutional royal power, and emphasis on the monarchy's ceremonial role presented

⁸² E. P. Thompson, 'The peculiarities of the English', *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London, 1978), p. 54; Nairn, *The Enchanted Glass*, pp. 361–5.

⁸³ N. St. John-Steuas (ed.) *Walter Bagehot* (London, 1959) p. 49; G. Himmelfarb, *Victorian Minds* (London, 1968), pp. 230–1; and in a more sophisticated form, S. Collini, D. Winch and J. Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 170.

⁸⁴ A. Briggs, *Victorian People* (Harmondsworth, 1965), pp. 99–100; J. G. Blumler, J. R. Brown, A. J. Ewbank and T. J. Nossiter, 'Attitudes to the monarchy: their structure and development during a ceremonial occasion', *Political Studies* 19 (1971), 149–71; R. Rose and D. Kavanagh, 'The monarchy in contemporary political culture', in R. Rose (ed.), *Studies in British Politics* (London, 1976), pp. 16–41.

⁸⁵ R. H. S. Crossman, 'Introduction', in W. Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (London, 1963), p. 33.

⁸⁶ W. Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, ed. M. Taylor (Oxford, 2001), p. 40; Craig, 'Crowned republic?', 169; B. Pimlott, *The Queen* (London, 2001), pp. 646–7, who argued that 'the persistence of the belief in the special access of Monarchs and by extension other royals to divine grace, alluded to by Bagehot, may indeed point in the direction in which we should be looking'.

⁸⁷ M. Taylor 'Introduction' to Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, pp. ix, xv, xx; P. Smith, 'Introduction' to W. Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (Cambridge, 2001), p. vii; H. S. Jones, *Victorian Political Thought* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 67–8.

'nothing . . . to astonish anyone familiar with the existing literature on the subject'.⁸⁸

More original were Bagehot's views on the tension between social cohesion and national progress. Such progress was only possible where government was 'government by discussion', and parliamentary government was more effective than presidential government in harnessing intelligence and promoting tolerance – the hallmarks of government by discussion.⁸⁹ But parliamentary government was only compatible with certain 'national characters', which are the product of natural selection and the force of imitation.⁹⁰ Even then, a progressive community with the appropriate national character might be unstable because of the survival among the majority of the population of elements of 'the unstable nature of their barbarous ancestors'.⁹¹ Bagehot therefore needed an explanation of 'how rational government by an élite could command the allegiance of masses supposedly incapable of rational political understanding', and found it in the deference of the masses to monarchical rule.⁹² Yet Paul Smith has noted that Bagehot's assertion that the masses believe that the monarch really rules had no firmer basis than what could be gleaned from speaking to servants, and that it is 'not clear how far he really believes this picture of popular innocence' – especially since he systematically undermined the idea that the practical working of government still required a monarch.⁹³

For Bagehot, the popularity of the monarchy was closely connected with its political role. Despite reservations about 'a timeless but ultimately futile discussion of whether the British . . . have ever really loved their monarchy',⁹⁴ most historians of the institution have considered part of their task to be explanation of its popular hold. Even so, there is surprisingly little research on 'what the monarchy has meant to the public at different times',⁹⁵ and even on the extent of royal popularity. The point is disputed for the pre-1870s period, and such claims as that after 1918 the

⁸⁸ Smith, 'Introduction', pp. xiii–xv.

⁸⁹ W. Bagehot, *Physics and Politics* (London, 1896 edn.), pp. 41, 64, 158.

⁹⁰ Collini, Winch and Burrow, *Noble Science*, pp. 164–70; D. M. Craig, 'Democracy and national character', *History of European Ideas* 29 (2003), 499–501.

⁹¹ Bagehot, *Physics and Politics*, p. 154.

⁹² Smith, 'Introduction', pp. xx–xxi; Taylor, 'Introduction', pp. xxi–xxv; Bagehot, *English Constitution*, pp. 34, 37, 46, 65, 185.

⁹³ Smith, 'Introduction', pp. xxi, xxvi; Bagehot, *English Constitution*, p. 44.

⁹⁴ M. Taylor, 'Republics versus empires: Charles Dilke's republicanism reconsidered', in D. Nash and A. Taylor (eds.), *Republicanism in Victorian Society* (Stroud, 2000), p. 25.

⁹⁵ Craig, 'Crowned republic?', 184. The most useful studies are H. Jennings and C. Madge (eds.), *May the Twelfth* (London, 1937); P. Ziegler, *Crown and People* (Newton Abbot, 1979); and M. Billig, *Talking of the Royal Family* (London, 1992). See also *Mass-Observation at the Movies*, ed. J. Richards and D. Sheridan (London, 1987) for popular reactions to newsreels featuring royalty during the Second World War.

monarchy's 'hold on the popular imagination was much strengthened' remain matters of judgement.⁹⁶

In addressing this issue, constitutional historians have tended to invert Bagehot. Where he saw parliamentary government deriving support and legitimacy from popular deference towards the monarchy, they consider the late Victorian monarchy's prestige to stem from its association with parliamentary government and with liberalism. Even so, Bogdanor returns to Bagehot in maintaining that the electorate needs 'the reassurance of a visible presence'.⁹⁷ Other historians have used sociological, psychological or anthropological theories. Edward Shils's and Michael Young's famous 1953 article on 'the meaning of the coronation' is most widely cited. While accepting that all societies have a clash of interests and beliefs, they argue that societies are nevertheless kept 'generally peaceful and coherent' by agreements on shared moral values; and that Britain had 'a degree of moral unity equalled by no other large national state', principally because of the 'assimilation of the working class into the moral consensus'. For them, the coronation is the ceremonial occasion for the affirmation of these moral values and for 'the Queen's promise to abide by the moral standards of society', such that through the mass media monarch and people were 'brought into a great nation-wide communion', with the characteristics of a religious ritual. Other, more frequent, royal events similarly affirm moral values: for example, the monarch's Christmas broadcast helps generate devotion to the monarch 'for the virtue which he expresses in his family life', which is in turn an expression of 'devotion to one's own family, because the values embodied in each are the same'.⁹⁸

Critics of Shils and Young point to their excessive functionalism and neglect of issues of power.⁹⁹ But, like Shils and Young, they accept that the monarchy is a dominant national institution, and broadly endorse Frank Parkin's theory of deviance: the 'normal' condition of dominant institutions is to enjoy popular support among all classes, unless individuals participate in normative sub-systems which act as 'barriers to the dominant values'.¹⁰⁰ On this understanding, explanation should be concerned

⁹⁶ McKibbin, *Ideologies*, p. 7. ⁹⁷ Bogdanor, *Monarchy*, pp. 40, 303.

⁹⁸ E. Shils and M. Young, 'The meaning of the Coronation', *The Sociological Review* 1 (1953), 63–81.

⁹⁹ N. Birnbaum, 'Monarchs and sociologists' *Sociological Review* 3 (1955), 5–23; S. Lukes, 'Political ritual and social integration', *Essays in Social Theory* (London, 1977), pp. 52–73. McKibbin, *Classes*, p. 13, endorses aspects of Shils's and Young's argument, but argues that there were 'always tacitly assumed that there were areas of British life where it could not expect its moral and emotional authority to be effective'.

¹⁰⁰ F. Parkin, 'Working-class Conservatives: a theory of political deviance', *British Journal of Sociology* 18 (1967), 282.

less with the monarchy's popularity than with its periods of unpopularity. Psychological theories indicate the same conclusion.¹⁰¹ On balance, the call to integrate sociological and anthropological theories into research on the monarchy has not met with a positive response,¹⁰² and with changing intellectual fashions, most historians probably find them 'rather crude and elitist'.¹⁰³ Instead, except for the impact of literary criticism on feminist studies of the monarchy, historians eschew theory (aside from noting its existence) and concentrate on recovering the specific historical context. This often produces thorough research into different aspects of royal public events and activities. But mostly these studies adopt an elite perspective, using sources left by Palace officials and other organizers, and usually assume that the popular reaction was what these had planned for and expected.

Many explanations of royal popularity still follow Cannadine's 1983 essay. He outlined ten aspects needing investigation: the monarch's political power; his or her character and reputation; the nation's economic and social structure; the national self-image; the type, extent and attitude of the media; the state of technology and fashion; the condition of the capital city where most royal ceremonials took place; the organisers' attitudes; the nature of the ceremonial as actually performed, and commercial exploitation of the occasion.¹⁰⁴ This remains a valuable research agenda, and several areas remain little studied. More contentious is how Cannadine interpreted developments in these areas. He focused his interpretation on the increasing elaboration, frequency and impact of royal ceremonies, and found especial significance in the period from the 1870s to 1914 – 'a time when old ceremonials were staged with an expertise and appeal which had been lacking before, and when new rituals were self-consciously invented to accentuate this development'.¹⁰⁵

Cannadine's essay should be considered in conjunction with his co-authored study of the Diamond Jubilee in Cambridge, and his book on the development of class in modern Britain. The planning of the 1897 celebrations in Cambridge exposed tensions between the university, the

¹⁰¹ E.g. E. Jones, 'The psychology of constitutional monarchy', *New Statesman and Nation*, 1 Feb. 1936, 141–2, arguing that in a constitutional monarchy, a Freudian desire for, yet horror of, parricide is reconciled by veneration of the monarch and periodic removal of the prime minister.

¹⁰² As noted by D. Cannadine, 'Divine rites of kings', in D. Cannadine and S. Price (eds.), *Rituals of Royalty* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 2–4, 12–9, though for acknowledgement of the difficulties see E. Hammerton and D. Cannadine, 'Conflict and consensus on a ceremonial occasion: the Diamond Jubilee in Cambridge in 1897', *Historical Journal* 24 (1981), 143–4. Perhaps the most successful use of sociological theory is the use of Ernest Gellner's theory of nationalism in Nairn, *Enchanted Glass*.

¹⁰³ Craig, 'Crowned republic?', 184.

¹⁰⁴ Cannadine, 'Context', pp. 106–7. ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 120.

middle-class town elite and the local working class; but the celebrations themselves demonstrated a large degree of consensus around a social order in which 'the empire, the university, the mayor, the volunteers and the church were all accorded star billing'.¹⁰⁶ Cannadine's book on class argues that, of the possible forms it might take, the idea of class as denoting a hierarchical society 'has had the widest, most powerful and most abiding appeal', partly because 'Britain retains intact an elaborate, formal system of rank and precedence, culminating in the monarchy itself'. The proliferation of royal ceremonials from the 1790s onwards renewed and reinforced this vision, because the latter 'put hierarchy on display with unprecedented vividness and immediacy'.¹⁰⁷

These three works together indicate why Cannadine believes grand ceremonies can account for royal popularity. Essentially he endorses the Shils and Young view of a reaffirmation of values, albeit those associated with hierarchy and, as the Cambridge study suggests, those which are dominant rather than general. This is plausible, and the case is strengthened by understanding that relatively infrequent grand national ceremonies were 'reproduced in miniature' in the localities, in comings-of-age on country estates, formal openings of new town halls, and the processions, anniversaries and festivals of friendly societies, chapels and volunteer brigades.¹⁰⁸ Yet Cannadine does not systematically consider the meaning of ritual for its audience. This remains the least satisfactory aspect of his work, especially since he appears sometimes to endorse the vague Bagehotian idea of the emotional draw of the 'theatrical show'.¹⁰⁹ Cannadine does wonder whether in Cambridge in 1897 many workers were not 'hostile or indifferent, and merely regarded the celebrations as an excuse to have a good time', but assumes that the context makes this seem 'intrinsically unlikely'.¹¹⁰ The problem is that a top-down approach means that an audience's reaction is left to plausible speculation or plain guesswork.

William Kuhn has criticized Cannadine's notion of the 1870s to 1914 as the heyday of 'invented tradition'.¹¹¹ First, he challenges a facile view that practices could simply be made up at will. By 1900 'continuities may have outweighed inventions', and he demonstrates how ceremony organizers placed great importance on precedent and accuracy: the more accurate notion would be 'renovation of tradition'.¹¹² Peter Hinchliff has

¹⁰⁶ Hammerton and Cannadine, 'Conflict', 115–43.

¹⁰⁷ D. Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (New Haven, 1998), pp. 22–3, 124–5.

¹⁰⁸ Ford and Harrison, *Hundred Years*, p. 261; and see Cannadine, 'Context', p. 138, and Cannadine, *Class*, pp. 124–5.

¹⁰⁹ Cannadine, 'Context', p. 516.

¹¹⁰ Hammerton and Cannadine, 'Conflict', p. 143 n. 136.

¹¹¹ Cannadine, 'Context', p. 108.

¹¹² W. M. Kuhn, *Democratic Royalism* (London, 1996), pp. 4, 72, 151.

similarly shown that at Edward VII's coronation, 'a more traditional pattern began to be re-established', based on detailed scholarship of rituals reaching back to the Middle Ages.¹¹³ Moreover, it is important to distinguish between different types of royal ceremonies. The 1887 Golden Jubilee, for which the only precedent was that of 1809, and the 1935 Silver Jubilee, for which there was no precedent, left greater room for innovation than more frequent or fundamental royal occasions.¹¹⁴ Second, Kuhn shows that ministers played an important part in planning royal ceremonies; that the 'apparent separation of ceremony from politics was itself the object of intense and feverish political activity'; and that Victoria herself was sceptical about the probity and value of public spectacles.¹¹⁵ Third, against Cannadine's cynical 'bread and circuses' view, Kuhn argues that the monarchy was also 'the possession, sometimes the obsession, of educated men and women', and that often these, as much as the masses, were the intended audience. Lord Esher in particular intended the ceremonies he orchestrated 'for a more select audience than those imagined by Bagehot'.¹¹⁶ Nonetheless, the effect of royal ceremonies on the people could hardly not be a critical consideration. Consequently they were gradually made 'representative': for the public thanksgiving for the Prince of Wales's recovery in 1872, seats were allocated for nonconformist and labour leaders, and by 1937 four ordinary workpeople were personally invited by George VI to the coronation service.¹¹⁷ Moreover, the interest of politicians in grand ceremonial occasions may well have been because they themselves expected benefits, in terms of approval among the electorate.¹¹⁸

A second front raises doubts about Cannadine's view that royal ceremony before the 1870s was so infrequent and 'ineptly managed' that it had little popular impact. In contrast, Colley has argued that the growth of newspapers, civic pride, and voluntary and loyalist organizations under

¹¹³ P. Hinchliff, 'Frederick Temple, Randall Davidson and the coronation of Edward VII', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 48 (1997), 71–95, though see 97–8 for the invention of one ritual, the retention of consecrated oil for subsequent coronations.

¹¹⁴ The only type of royal ritual to receive systematic research is funerals: see J. Wolffe, *Great Deaths* (Oxford, 2000), and 'Royalty and public grief in Britain: an historical perspective, 1817–1997', in T. Walter (ed.), *The Mourning for Diana* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 53–64. Of course Princess Diana's death and funeral produced an outpouring of commentary: see e.g. M. Merck (ed.), *After Diana: Irreverent Elegies* (London, 1987); J. Richards, S. Wilson and L. Woodhead (eds.), *Diana: The Making of a Media Saint* (London, 1999).

¹¹⁵ W. M. Kuhn, 'Ceremony and politics: The British monarchy, 1871–1872', *Journal of British Studies* 26 (1987), 133–62.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 162; Kuhn, *Democratic Royalism*, p. 72.

¹¹⁷ Ford and Harrison, *Hundred Years*, p. 262; Jennings and Madge, *May the Twelfth*, p. 6.

¹¹⁸ For the 1870s, see Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*, pp. 110–1; and for the 1935 Jubilee, McKibbin, *Classes*, p. 8.

George III meant that 'the efficacy of royal celebration was increased and assured by the active collaboration of a multiplicity of individuals and interest groups far removed from the inner circle of Britain's socio-political elite'. By 1820 it was 'axiomatic that royal celebration should ideally involve all political affiliations, all religious groupings and all parts of Great Britain', and should seem to be national and not sectional celebration'.¹¹⁹ Against Cannadine's further suggestion that George IV's and William IV's political partisanship 'made grand royal ceremonial unacceptable, then renewed royal unpopularity made it impossible', there is Colley's evidence of many 'ostentatiously bi-partisan' local committees organising coronation ceremonies in 1821, 1831 and 1837, and the popular success of George IV's official visits to Dublin and Edinburgh.¹²⁰ Studies of Victoria's and Albert's provincial visits in the 1840s and 1850s demonstrate that they had 'learned how to provide crowd-pleasing spectacles for [their] provincial subjects', by 'a potent combination of splendour, modernity and homeliness that was in tune with middle class expectations of a national monarchy' – indeed they had little choice because town councils, railway companies and newspapers often made the Queen's wishes for a private visit impossible.¹²¹ What meaning did the cheering crowds attach to these occasions? John Plunkett argues that they were public displays of 'Victoria's reliance on the approval of her subjects, a celebration of the inclusivity and participation of the People in the political nation', and were 'invested with the discourse of popular constitutionalism'. Yet even this remains guesswork, as the 'assimilation of the monarchy into individual subjectivities' is still unexplored.¹²²

For recent times, there is growing interest in how the ceremonial monarchy has been affected by the 'decline in formality' and increased social diversity and heterogeneity of norms. It has been noted that in many respects it became less formal, two key changes being a filmed documentary of the Royal Family's lifestyle in 1969 and the Queen's 'walkabouts' from the 1970s.¹²³ 'Ancient' ceremonies have been altered, and the monarchy has enjoyed some recent ceremonial successes. However, for some historians it still remains a Victorian 'great-power monarchy', which exists awkwardly in contemporary society and cannot match the

¹¹⁹ L. Colley, 'The apotheosis of George III: loyalty, royalty and the British nation, 1760–1820', *Past and Present* 102 (1984), 112; Colley, *Britons*, pp. 217–36.

¹²⁰ Cannadine, 'Context', p. 109; Colley, *Britons*, p. 231.

¹²¹ A. Tyrrell and Y. Ward, "'God bless her little majesty': the popularising of monarchy in the 1840s", *National Identities* 2 (2000), 109–24; Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*, pp. 81–99; J. Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch* (Oxford, 2003), ch. 1.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 17, and cf. p. 8.

¹²³ Harrison, *Transformation*, p. 326; Pimlott, *The Queen*, pp. 379–88, 397, 447; Ziegler, *Crown and People*, p. 183.

scale and impact of previous royal occasions. Crucially, it no longer has the earlier web of institutional supports, especially the countless local civic ceremonies to mark every royal birth or wedding, nor the force of 'a potent and evocative constitutional symbolism' which underpinned earlier ceremonial successes.¹²⁴

Another set of explanations for royal popularity predicts a brighter future for the monarchy. Prochaska argues that it has remained relevant, and thwarted republicanism and socialism because it created a new role as a focus for civil society through its patronage of charities and its 'highly visible, public-spirited social service'.¹²⁵ Although royal philanthropy was often motivated by fear of political disorder, by the mid-nineteenth century the monarchy had become 'a force for liberal values', and by its encouragement of voluntary organizations, was fostering 'democratic aspirations among the lower classes'. Indeed its civic activities meant that it could (though it did not) 'make claims to a hybrid form of republican virtue'.¹²⁶ Consequently, royal charitable work has generated little political or media criticism, even though at times it was deployed as 'a bastion of individualism against collectivism' – notably under the Attlee Labour government.¹²⁷ In the 1990s, nearly 3,500 organisations had royal patrons, and there was 'no sign that the royal family is being deserted by its charitable allies'.¹²⁸ Indeed, some historians believe that the decline of socialism presents the monarchy with new opportunities to extend its charitable work, and 'is likely to sustain royal popularity'.¹²⁹

Prochaska identifies two further reasons why royal philanthropy has created royal popularity. First, from Prince Albert's time it brought the monarchy into close contact with large numbers of the working and middle classes. This was true even during Victoria's 'seclusion' after Albert's death, when her refusal to undertake public ceremonial duties is supposed to have damaged the monarchy – because she continued most of her charitable activities and was everywhere greeted by 'large enthusiastic crowds'. Second, the monarchy always encouraged the belief that individuals, however humble, had a claim on its services, and through civic and charitable associations and the honours system, 'the royal culture of

¹²⁴ Cannadine, in *Times Literary Supplement*, 3 Nov. 1995; Plunkett, *First Media Monarch*, pp. 245–7.

¹²⁵ Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*, passim; Prochaska, *Republic of Britain*, p. xviii.

¹²⁶ Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*, pp. 81–86, 98–9, 150, 176, 206; Prochaska, 'George V and republicanism, 1917–1919', *Twentieth Century British History* 10 (1999), 27–51.

¹²⁷ Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*, pp. 206, 275, 127–33, 232–8. This does not mean that there was no basis for criticism: see D. Cannadine, 'Social workers', *London Review of Books*, 5 Oct. 1995, for the comment that growing royal giving coexisted with growing royal taking, as tax exemptions and civil list savings increased.

¹²⁸ Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*, pp. 274–5.

¹²⁹ F. Prochaska, 'The monarchy and charity', *ODNBO*; Harrison, *Transformation*, p. 381; V. Bogdanor, *Power and the People* (London, 1997), pp. 188–93.

hierarchical condescension and the mass culture of social aspiration successfully merged'. Where Cannadine assumed in a Bagehotian way that the royal appeal to the masses was substantially emotional, Prochaska declares that people were 'not as dim as Bagehot gave them credit for being'. The crowds who cheered royal patrons understood that they performed a necessary role and supported useful, ameliorative schemes.¹³⁰ Yet Prochaska as much as Cannadine has an elite perspective, with no attempt to examine the sources which could give a detailed impression of the views of ordinary participants in charitable visits. Nevertheless, Prochaska's contribution is not just important in itself, but prompts thought about other, still unresearched, aspects of the 'efficient' public royal role, for example the relationship between monarchy and sport, especially football.¹³¹

Both Prochaska and Cannadine have emphasized the 'feminisation of the monarchy'. The former argued that the availability of dutiful female royal patrons has been essential for the welfare monarchy, and noted that since the 1830s the sovereign was more often a queen than a king, while the latter asserted that in the modern Royal Family 'kings reigned, but matriarchy ruled', and that 'George VI seems to have been the ultimate castrated male'.¹³² Only very recently have feminist and other historians begun systematic study of the connections between royal gender, the royal role and royal popularity, though mainly for Victoria's reign.¹³³

The pioneering work was Dorothy Thompson's *Queen Victoria: Gender and Power* (1990). She wondered whether a female monarch appeared to English subjects 'more amenable to constitutional control' and less 'political' in an age when public politics was exclusively a male preserve, and suggested that non-English and colonial subjects found a female, matriarchal, monarch more acceptable than a king. She also noted George Eliot's remark that the Queen 'calls forth a chivalrous feeling', and argued that her public 'seclusion' after 1861 was not universally condemned because it was understood that she would continue many important female tasks, such as advising daughters.¹³⁴ Reynolds similarly argued that Victoria 'shared the ideal of the private, domestic woman

¹³⁰ Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*, pp. 87–91, 100–2, 110–1, 150–1, 178, 204, 238.

¹³¹ See suggestive comments in R. Holt, *Sport and the British* (Oxford, 1992), and by George Lansbury in Nairn, *Enchanted Glass*, p. 341. Kings and princes were often presented as sportsmen.

¹³² Prochaska, *Royal Bounty*, p. 280; D. Cannadine, *History in Our Times* (London, 1998), p. 66; Cannadine, 'Biography', 303. See also the comment in Ford and Harrison, *Hundred Years*, p. 267, that people could identify with the monarchy because a 'figure resembling the Queen presided over many Victorian families'.

¹³³ The other main exception is contemporary comment on Princess Diana: see e.g. B. Campbell, *Diana, Princess of Wales: How Sexual Politics Shook The Monarchy* (London, 1998).

¹³⁴ Thompson, *Queen Victoria*, pp. xvi, 138–9.

and the public, political man', that her court's domesticity disguised her actual role in government, and that the public came to regard her reluctance to appear in public as 'suitably womanly' and her eventual appearances as 'courageous acts'.¹³⁵

The most suggestive work has been by Margaret Homans and Adrienne Munich, who share the view that 'Victoria was central to the ideological and cultural signifying system of her age'.¹³⁶ Exploring the paradox of a female monarch in an age when women were expected to 'obey', Homans argued that Victoria's role as a wife 'subdued anxieties about female rule', made her a model for the middle class, and facilitated the shift to a symbolic monarchy, since although women were not active political participants a wife was expected to exercise 'influence', display status, and be 'available for idealization'. Her public seclusion after 1861 enacted the withdrawal of the constitutional monarch from a role in government, and if absent in person she was nevertheless ubiquitous in popular literature.¹³⁷ For Munich her 'inspired performances' of 'the age's significant cultural codes' enabled people to imagine they were doing the Queen's work, whether in explorations, imperial wars, or even having portraits made of their pets.¹³⁸ Both authors have been criticized for lack of historical rigour, in their bold readings of texts characteristic of some literary and cultural studies without paying any attention to the reception of those texts, and Homans for an insistence on Victoria's active agency in fashioning the monarchy which expresses feminist priorities, unwarranted by the evidence.¹³⁹ Moreover, insistence on Victoria's agency once again reflects the top-down approach to investigations of royal popularity. Although the greater female support for monarchy is sometimes noted, this has not received detailed historical explanation.¹⁴⁰ Nor are there studies of areas of specific female interest, such as royal weddings or fashion.¹⁴¹

Modern royal masculinity remains almost wholly unstudied, either in terms of how kings and princes imagined themselves, or how their male

¹³⁵ Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*, pp. 189–90, 209.

¹³⁶ M. Homans and A. Munich, 'Introduction', in Homans and Munich (eds.), *Remaking Queen Victoria* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 2.

¹³⁷ M. Homans, *Royal Representations* (Chicago, 1998), pp. 2, 101, ch. 2; M. Homans, "'To the Queen's private apartments': royal family portraiture and the construction of Victoria's sovereign obedience", *Victorian Studies* 37 (1993), 1–41.

¹³⁸ Homans and Munich, 'Introduction', p. 5; A. Munich, *Queen Victoria's Secrets* (New York, 1996), p. 278.

¹³⁹ Arnstein, *Queen Victoria*, p. 10; R. Altick, 'Performing queen', *Times Literary Supplement*, 14 May 1999; K. Israel review, *Social History* 25 (2000), 59–60.

¹⁴⁰ Though for a social psychologist's views, see Billig, *Talking*, ch. 7.

¹⁴¹ For suggestive material see E. Allen, 'Culinary exhibition: Victorian wedding cakes and royal spectacle', *Victorian Studies* 45 (2003), 457–84; N. Arch and J. Marschner, *The Royal Wedding Dresses* (London, 1990); V. Mendes and A. de la Haye, *Twentieth Century Fashion* (London, 1999); L. Ebbetts and T. Graham, *The Royal Style Wars* (London, 1988).

personae appealed to their male and female subjects.¹⁴² Other historians have found explanations for royal popularity less in monarch's gender than in identification with the Royal Family, established through royal portraiture and probably more powerfully through reports of sentimental and trivial details, which simultaneously offer escape into 'a fairy-tale world' and a familiar image of a middle-class family. Williams has charted the Victorian evolution of this identification, noting the enormous coverage of the Princess Royal's wedding in 1858.¹⁴³

Ceremony, charity and family as sources of royal popularity all depended on the media for their projection, and the various media have been prominent in cultural studies of the monarchy. For Plunkett, the Victorian growth of mass print and visual media was chiefly responsible for the 'almost limitless plasticity' of the Queen's public image. Newspapers had an enormous and constant appetite for royal stories, which generated a fusion between deferential and disrespectful strands of reportage.¹⁴⁴ Yet it is astonishing how long it took for the disrespectful strand to become really prominent – perhaps not until the 1980s – and even then a 'bad' story could generate sympathy or reaffirm the Queen's integrity in upholding the monarchy's ideals.¹⁴⁵ Visual media were consistently supportive: royal *cartes de visite* widely circulated an intimate and flattering image of royalty in the Victorian era, while between the wars the British Board of Film Censors forbade any depiction or reference to the Royal Family in feature films.¹⁴⁶ With the institution of the Christmas Day broadcast in 1932, George V was the first monarch able to speak directly to his subjects, equating 'the family audience, the royal family, the nation as family' at a uniquely propitious moment in the calendar.¹⁴⁷

Historians have noted a connection between television and the construction of a less formal monarchy in the 1960s, but it is in other

¹⁴² Useful indications are M. Francis, 'The domestication of the male: recent research on nineteenth- and twentieth-century British masculinity', *Historical Journal* 45 (2002), 637–52, and – again on the important issue of fashion, on which Edwards VII and VIII made notable contributions – B. Shannon, 'Re-fashioning men: fashion, masculinity, and the cultivation of the male consumer in Britain, 1860–1914', *Victorian Studies* 46 (2004), 597–630.

¹⁴³ Williams, *Contentious Crown*, pp. 192, 203, 205, and see S. Schama, 'The domestication of majesty: royal family portraiture, 1500–1850', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17 (1986), 155–8, 183. The reality was, of course, very different: see e.g. Cannadine, 'Last Hanoverian sovereign?', pp. 146–51.

¹⁴⁴ Plunkett, *First Media Monarch*, pp. 2, 7, 98, 238–43.

¹⁴⁵ See Billig, *Talking*, ch. 6.

¹⁴⁶ J. Plunkett, 'Celebrity and community: the poetics of the *carte-de-visite*', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 8 (2003), 55–77; A. Schwarzenbach, 'Royal photographs: emotions for the people', *Contemporary European History* 13 (2004), 255–80; J. Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace* (London, 1984), pp. 117–8, 264–5, 269.

¹⁴⁷ P. Scannell and D. Cardiff, *A Social History of Broadcasting*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1991), pp. 280–1.

disciplines that television's ability to fashion royal popularity has been investigated. Dayan and Katz argued that such ceremonies as royal weddings are 'characterized by a *norm of viewing* in which people tell each other that it is mandatory to view', and 'integrate societies in a collective heartbeat and evoke a *renewal of loyalty* to the society and its legitimate authority'.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, both the BBC and commercial television still accord respect and exercise discretion in their reportage of the monarchy.

Television also developed new genres, notably the soap operas, which now attract the largest audiences, often much larger than audiences for royal events.¹⁴⁹ A number of writers have claimed that the popular national and international appeal of the monarchy now lies in the fact that it is a 'full-blown Soap Monarchy'.¹⁵⁰ British soap operas began on radio in the late 1940s, but it was not until the 1980s rumours about the failing marriage of the Prince of Wales that the parallels struck home. In 1984, Ros Coward observed that popular assimilation of the Royal Family with soap-opera conventions meant that it was not regarded as a political institution, but considered only in terms of human behaviour, human emotions and family choices, and that the effect was to reinforce traditional values and define women in terms of sexual attraction.¹⁵¹ As soap operas generate tremendous loyalty among their predominantly female audience, so a 'soap monarchy' may partly explain why the contemporary monarchy has greater appeal among women. Television has also been a force shaping modern celebrity culture, and younger members of the Royal Family – above all Princess Diana – have come to be treated in the media as celebrity 'stars'.

This tendency to equate monarchy with soap opera or celebrity has been challenged on the grounds that it misses the true distinctiveness of monarchy. For Nairn, this distinctiveness lay in its possession of 'the "glamour" . . . of persons and symbols ordinary in appearance but quite

¹⁴⁸ D. Dayan and E. Katz, 'Defining media events', in H. Tumber (ed.), *News* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 51, 54–5; and Dayan and Katz, 'Electronic ceremonies: television performs a royal wedding', *Media Events* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), pp. 16–32.

¹⁴⁹ *Coronation Street* and *EastEnders* were the top two programmes in term of ratings in 2005, and the wedding of Prince Charles to Camilla Parker Bowles in April 2005 attracted 7 million viewers compared to 13 million for the wedding of Ken and Deirdre in *Coronation Street*: *Guardian*, 11 Apr. 2005, 9 Jan. 2006. See also D. Self, *Television Drama* (London, 1984), p. 32.

¹⁵⁰ R. W. Johnson, 'Tom Nairn and the monarchy', *Heroes and Villains* (Hemel Hempstead, 1990), p. 156; D. Cannadine, *The Pleasures of the Past* (London, 1990), p. 9.

¹⁵¹ R. Coward, 'The royals', *Female Desire* (London, 1984), p. 171. For some rather different emphases, see C. Geraghty, *Women and Soap Opera* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 54–62, 82–97, 117.

super-ordinary in significance'.¹⁵² For Rosalind Brunt, it is the institution which comes closest in modern times to possessing 'charisma'.¹⁵³ Michael Billig, seeking to reconstruct 'common-sense thinking' from interviews, argued that the monarchy's fame is 'completely unlike that of any other celebrity in the modern world' for two reasons. First, entertainment celebrities are not considered to 'embody a national heritage and the future continuity of a nation'. Second, no other figures are guaranteed a lifetime of celebrity from birth, and this permanence of royal fame means that 'our' lives run in parallel to theirs in a reassuring continuity.¹⁵⁴

A feature that the contemporary monarchy shares with celebrity culture is marketing. The range of royal memorabilia has long been astonishing in variety and volume. From the early 1840s royal visits were exploited by souvenir manufacturers, and grand royal ceremonies could provoke fierce competition among businesses and housing districts.¹⁵⁵ Not only were goods used to sell royalty; royalty was used to sell goods. Thomas Richards has argued that the use of Victoria's image 'both legitimated consumption for women by offering them the Queen's stamp of approval, and lured even more women into department stores by leading them to believe that there they, too, would be treated like royalty'.¹⁵⁶ The use of the contemporary monarchy for advertising is more discreet and controlled through the granting of royal warrants, and membership of the Royal Warrant Holders' Association.¹⁵⁷ Nonetheless, marketing was and is an expression of what might be called 'banal monarchism' – the ways in which a positive view of the monarchy is insinuated into the everyday lives of its subjects. By contrast, the amount of anti-monarchist memorabilia is negligible, and has no everyday impact. The 'royalness' of material culture and its impact is another area that requires much further research.¹⁵⁸

'Banal monarchism' is a deliberate echo of Billig's notion of 'banal nationalism', meaning how nationalism is made 'the endemic condition' of people's daily lives, for example by the newspapers' trope of addressing

¹⁵² Nairn, *Enchanted Glass*, p. 27, 45, 214.

¹⁵³ R. Brunt, 'A "divine gift to inspire"?: popular cultural representation, nationhood and the British monarchy', in D. Strinati and S. Wagg (eds.), *Come On Down?* (London, 1992), pp. 285–301.

¹⁵⁴ Billig, *Talking*, pp. 19, 220–3.

¹⁵⁵ Tyrrell and Ward, 'God bless', 115; Jennings and Madge, *May the Twelfth*, pp. 11, 24–6, 82, 300–1.

¹⁵⁶ T. Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England* (Stanford, 1990), p. 102.

¹⁵⁷ For royal warrants, www.royal.gov.uk.

¹⁵⁸ E.g. K. Jeffrey, 'Crown, communication and the colonial post: stamps, the monarchy and the British Empire', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 34 (2006), 45–70.

'this country' or 'the nation'.¹⁵⁹ A recognition that the monarchy somehow embodies national identity is more or less ubiquitous in the historical literature, but it is too often assumed to be self-evident, unproblematic and 'eternal'. Not only does this infringe the usual historical insistence upon attention to context; it also concedes, unexamined, what is perhaps the central monarchist claim – that in some metaphorical or even real sense the monarchy is the nation. This is not to reject the claim: Billig's analysis of his interviewees' language showed how closely they equated monarchy and nation, and it is evident that certain royal events can trigger moments of deep reflection about national identity.¹⁶⁰ But the equation is complex and certainly not complete. It has sometimes been questioned, as with criticisms of Albert in the mid-1850s and of 'a German on the throne' during the First World War. Less remarked has been evidence of an indifference to the symbol of monarchy at times of national crisis, such as Vera Brittain's 1941 meditation on the word 'England', as meaning not its Royal Family but 'the fields and lanes of its lovely countryside'.¹⁶¹ Also, what could be regarded as an English monarchy serving as the unifying symbol of a multi-national state, has had the potential to create nationalist tensions.¹⁶² That this potential has hardly ever been realized has been ascribed variously to such material factors as railways, commerce or educational institutions which 'blended' the nationalities, to the closeness of English intellectuals to the 'Ukanian monarchy' and state, and to the monarchy's and the state's sensitivity towards national sensibilities on grand ceremonial occasions'.¹⁶³ More recent examinations of the nature of English national identity have concluded that it did not impede the growth of British national identity. Hugh Kearney

¹⁵⁹ M. Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London, 1995).

¹⁶⁰ Billig, *Talking*, p. 33, 38–9; and see e.g. J. Wolfe, 'Judging the nation: early nineteenth-century British evangelicals and divine retribution', in K. Cooper and J. Gregory (eds.), *Retribution, Repentance and Reconciliation* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 198–9, 293–5 (the deaths of Princess Charlotte in 1817 and Prince Albert in 1861), and J. McGuigan, 'British identity and "the people's princess"', *Sociological Review* 48 (2000), 1 (the death of Princess Diana).

¹⁶¹ V. Brittain, *England's Hour* (London, 1941; 1981), pp. 195–6. See also Ziegler, *Crown and People*, ch. 3; Richards and Sheridan, *Mass-Observation at the Movies*, pp. 185, 213, 399, 414.

¹⁶² E.g. M. Cragoe, 'Two princes: manipulating monarchy in mid-Victorian Wales' (unpublished paper), describing nationalists' difficulties in erecting a monument to Prince Llewellyn and loyalists' success in erecting one to Prince Albert in the 1860s.

¹⁶³ K. Robbins, 'An imperial and multinational polity: the "scene from the centre", 1832–1922', in A. Grant and K. Stringer (ed.), *Uniting the Kingdom?* (London, 1995), p. 251; Nairn, *Enchanted Glass*, pp. 183–4; J. Loughlin, 'Allegiance and illusion: Queen Victoria's Irish visit of 1849', *History* 87 (2002), 491–513; S. Pařeta, 'Nationalist responses to two royal visits to Ireland, 1900 and 1903', *Irish Historical Studies* 31 (1999), 488–504; J. S. Ellis, 'Reconciling the Celt: British national identity, empire, and the 1911 Investiture of the Prince of Wales', *Journal of British Studies* 37 (1998), 391–418.

notes the compatibility of an often ethnic 'Englishness' with a historically inclusive civic British identity, and Krishnan Kumar suggests that English nationalism appeared only towards the end of the nineteenth century, and even then took 'cultural, not political form'.¹⁶⁴

A further debate has been whether a monarchical national identity has subsumed class identity. For Nairn, the forging during the French wars of 1793–1815 of a 'Royal-conservative' nationalism was a 'virtually total triumph'. It shaped a conformist, corporatist, insular and consolatory consciousness of 'class' as confined within a hierarchical culture, which enabled the state 'to bury the political and ideological dimension of class-struggle virtually without a contest'.¹⁶⁵ For Colley, because national mobilization was connected with popular participation, the British ruling classes were nervous about resorting to it, with the effect that much of the growing sense of nation was 'spontaneously generated from below' by social groups who used it as a strategy to advance their sectional interests.¹⁶⁶ For both Colley and Nairn, then, class and nation were not antithetical but two sides of the same processes – but for Colley, class consciousness was normally oppositional to some degree.

Historians have detected variations of the equation between monarchy and nation. Williams found that the identification of monarchy with 'national greatness and national cohesion' increased from the 1870s.¹⁶⁷ Kearney considered that the First World War created a civic, non-sectarian, common feeling of 'Britishness', turning partly around the monarchy.¹⁶⁸ More controversially, Nairn has argued that by the 1990s an 'unstoppable slide' in the monarchy's popularity indicated that its 'glamour' had vanished, and that a royal sense of nationhood had been abandoned.¹⁶⁹ A more common view is that by the 1990s, any coherent notion of national identity had become more difficult because of the unprecedented social diversity created particularly by Caribbean and Asian immigration since 1948 – though in such views, the implications for the monarchy have rarely been noted.¹⁷⁰

Given the centrality in the literature of the relationship between the monarchy and national identity, it is surprising that no historian has yet

¹⁶⁴ H. Kearney, 'The importance of being British', *Political Quarterly* 71 (2000), 15–25; K. Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. x, xii, 181–3.

¹⁶⁵ Nairn, *Enchanted Glass*, pp. 134–6, 184–5, 231, 265, 321–2.

¹⁶⁶ L. Colley, 'Whose nation?: class and national consciousness in Britain, 1750–1830', *Past and Present*, No. 113 (1995), 97–117.

¹⁶⁷ Williams, *Contentious Crown*, pp. 153–5.

¹⁶⁸ Kearney, 'The importance of being British', 21.

¹⁶⁹ Nairn, *Enchanted Glass*, pp. x, xx, xxviii; idem., *After Britain* (London, 2001), pp. 52–3.

¹⁷⁰ J. Harris, 'Tradition and transformation', in K. Burk (ed.), *The British Isles since 1945* (New York, 2002), p. 122; R. Weight, *Patriots* (London, 2002), pp. 73–3; Kearney, 'Importance of being British', 23–4; Kumar, *Making of English National Identity*, pp. 239–72.

followed Nairn in making this their main focus. The closest is perhaps Richard Weight's *Patriots*. He charts the decline since 1940 in the significance of the 'four main stays' of British national identity – monarchy, Protestantism, democracy and the empire. He sees the English subsuming their identity in the idea of Britain, and thereby treating the other nationalities with a 'myopia and complacency' which proved fatal to national unity. Although the monarchy accommodated national sensibilities in its ceremonies, it was powerless to counteract government 'thoughtlessness, lack of tact and disregard of sentiment' in Scotland and Wales. Crucially, when by the early 1990s the monarchy 'was virtually all that was left of Britishness', it entered a great period of crisis which left it useless for promoting a British identity.¹⁷¹ The argument is contentious, and other writers have emphasized the persistence of the structural underpinnings of British identity and the New Labour project to promote a new kind of Britishness, while the popular response in Scotland and Wales as well as England to the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002 suggested a more effective British institution.

For Kumar, the reason why English nationalism has remained inhibited, is that the English have been empire-builders and so subscribed to an 'imperial' or 'missionary' nationalism reaching beyond nations; and other historians have long stressed the ubiquity of empire in the life of the nation since the 1880s.¹⁷² More recently the impact of the expansion and loss of the empire on royal identity has been examined. So the 1870s is regarded as marking 'a new emphasis on the Crown as symbol of imperial unity', with a female monarch well placed to benefit from the images of motherhood and womanliness associated with empire. Victoria's jubilees and funeral had at their heart military processions which highlighted imperial might.¹⁷³ And where the 1876 Royal Titles Act had provoked criticism, the 1901 Royal Titles Act making Edward VII King of Britain, Ireland 'and the British Dominions beyond the Seas' had cross-party support.

Cannadine's *Ornamentalism* challenged imperial historians' assumptions about the character of the empire. He argued that it should be regarded as a complex social rather than racial hierarchy, which sought to replicate British social structures – a social vision dramatized and

¹⁷¹ Weight, *Patriots*, pp. 10–2, 212–6, 279–81, 681–4, 726–7, 730.

¹⁷² Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity*, pp. 32–4, 188–90; and see e.g. J. M. Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire* (Manchester, 1984); J. M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester, 1986); F. Driver and D. Gilbert (eds.), *Imperial Cities* (Manchester, 1999). But for a contrary view see B. Porter, "Empire, what empire?", *Victorian Studies* 46 (2004), 258–61; B. Porter, *The Absent-minded Imperialists* (Oxford, 2004).

¹⁷³ P. Ward, *Britishness since 1870* (London, 2004), ch. 1, and see Williams, *Contentious Crown*, pp. 155, 173, 175–7; Thompson, *Queen Victoria*, p. 130; Matthew, 'Public life and politics', p. 124.

inculcated by royal tours, royal governor-generals, proconsular pomp and honours, and in India the royal durbars of 1877, 1903 and 1911.¹⁷⁴ It has been criticized by some for its elite perspective and its romanticizing of a bloody and racist enterprise.¹⁷⁵ Others have suggested that British understandings of kingship and royal occasions or visits were manipulated by indigenous rulers and elites to increase their own authority, while Jon Lonsdale has demonstrated that Africans had a constitutional rather than 'ornamental' attitude towards the imperial monarchy: they looked to it for protection against local colonial excess, and expected a reciprocal relation of benefits between wealthy patrons and loyal clients.¹⁷⁶ As for the Commonwealth, most studies have been constitutional rather than political histories. Philip Murphy, however, has suggested that the monarchy might have been an obstacle to the development of closer relations between Britain and her former colonies, for the Queen was regarded as being susceptible to political or personal 'embarrassment', which might undermine British prestige in the territory concerned and tarnish the monarch's image in Britain.¹⁷⁷

Murphy's reminder that the monarchy's imperial and post-imperial identity had an influence on its popularity in Britain prompts two further observations. Once again, the adoption of an elite perspective means there has been almost no attempt to investigate how ordinary people responded to imperial greatness and its decline. One female diarist noted on Jubilee Day 1887, that 'it was rather a proud thought to feel all these potentates were our subjects, & had come in a way to do homage'.¹⁷⁸ How common was this sentiment? Was it based on a sense of racial superiority? Did it persist until the end of empire, and what replaced it after the end of empire?¹⁷⁹ Second, as Matthew commented: why did the 'great turning point' in Britain's world role represented by creation of the welfare state

¹⁷⁴ D. Cannadine, *Ornamentalism* (London, 2001), pp. xix, 8–9, 45–54, 65–9, 85–100, 114–8.

¹⁷⁵ E.g. S. Rosenberg, 'The justice of Queen Victoria': Boer oppression, and the emergence of a national identity in Lesotho', *National Identities* 3 (2001), 133–53; M. Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts* (2001), part I.

¹⁷⁶ See A. Clarkson, 'Pomp, circumstance, and wild Arabs: the 1912 royal visit to Sudan', J. Lonsdale, 'Ornamental constitutionalism in Africa: Kenyatta and the two queens', and J. Willis, 'A portrait for the Mukama: monarchy and Empire in colonial Bunyoro, Uganda', all in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 34 (2006), 71–85, 87–103, 105–122.

¹⁷⁷ P. Murphy, 'Breaking the bad news: plans for the announcement to the Empire of the death of Elizabeth II and the proclamation of her successor, 1952–67', *ibid.*, 139–54; *idem.*, 'The African queen? Republicanism and defensive decolonization in British tropical Africa, 1958–64', *Twentieth Century British History* 14 (2003), 243–63.

¹⁷⁸ Z. Shonfield (ed.), *The Precariously Privileged* (Oxford, 1987), p. 148.

¹⁷⁹ For some speculations, see 'Introduction' to B. Schwarz (ed.), *The Expansion of England* (London, 1996), pp. 1–8; S. Howe, 'Internal decolonization? British politics since Thatcher as post-colonial trauma', *Twentieth Century British History* 14 (2003), 286–304.

and abandonment of the title 'emperor' in 1947 not bring about 'some fundamental reconsideration of the role of the monarchy'.¹⁸⁰

One reason why monarchs tend to resist change may lie in the significance of their coronation. It both represents a quasi-ordination and consecration¹⁸¹ and displays and legitimates the social hierarchy,¹⁸² so monarchs – with the notable exception of Edward VIII – are likely to feel a sacred obligation to defend their patrimony, including its Anglican basis. The nineteenth-century state endorsed the power of prayer, royal ceremony was seen by some as essentially religious and, more pervasively, as John Wolffe has commented, 'at the time of Britain's zenith as a great power in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, claims to God's especial favour were extensively made.'¹⁸³ By the 1930s, the Church of England was 'increasingly becoming a sector in society rather than pervading and guiding society as a whole';¹⁸⁴ and despite signs of renewed prominence in the 1950s, its loss of wider moral authority over society continued after the Second World War, making it 'the private pursuit of a minority'.¹⁸⁵

However, there is poll evidence that in 1964 around 30 per cent believed that the Queen had been chosen by God, and some 35 per cent in the mid-1950s; and Ziegler guesses that the figure must have been around 50 per cent before 1939.¹⁸⁶ Wolffe finds much evidence of the vigour of 'civil religion' – 'the use of religious forms and language in public life', still often 'founded on the conviction that direct contact is being made with God, or at least with something transcendent'. The monarchy is central to this practice, and in re-examining familiar royal duties and ceremonies, he has emphasized a religious dimension neglected by other historians. The implication is that religious ritual satisfied that residual, diffuse Christianity of the majority of the population. Even so, Wolffe considers that television – by replacing local church attendance with viewing in homes – has weakened the religious impact of grand ceremonies.¹⁸⁷

Wolffe sees supernatural beliefs as instances of 'common religion', and McKibbin has argued that the inter-war monarchy 'developed a

¹⁸⁰ H. C. G. Matthew, 'George VI', *ODNBO*.

¹⁸¹ See esp. I. Bradley, *God Save the Queen* (London, 2002), ch. 4; C. Longley, *Chosen People* (London, 2003), ch. 2.

¹⁸² D. Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (New Haven, 1998), pp. 85, 155.

¹⁸³ F. M. Turner, 'Rainfall, plagues, and the Prince of Wales', *Journal of British Studies* 13 (1974), 60; Kuhn, 'Ceremony and politics', 155–6; J. Wolffe, 'The religions of the silent majority', in G. Parsons (ed.), *The Growth of Religious Diversity, Vol. I* (London, 1993), p. 325.

¹⁸⁴ G. I. T. Machin, 'Marriage and the churches in the 1930s: royal abdication and divorce reform, 1936–7', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 42 (1991), 81.

¹⁸⁵ Weight, *Patriots*, pp. 12, 223–6, 727. ¹⁸⁶ Ziegler, *Crown and People*, p. 36.

¹⁸⁷ Wolffe, 'Religions of the silent majority', pp. 309–10, 317, 321–6, 342.

quasi-magical character' and that as life became more dominated by 'rational' procedures, 'arguably the magic became yet more acceptable to the public'.¹⁸⁸ Yet the argument that the popularity of the monarchy is explained as much or more by its hold on common religion as on civil religion, is unconvincing. Such magical beliefs about royalty can still be found in tabloid newspapers, but the tone is a mixture of earnestness and knowingness.¹⁸⁹ The inter-war tone was less familiar, but no less knowing.

III

Monarchy has seemed impregnable in Britain: it has been acceptable to the political establishment and popular with the people. Consequently many historians of the monarchy have never given republicans more than a passing reference. From the 1960s there were a few specialist studies of republican movements,¹⁹⁰ but their history tended to be of interest mainly to committed republicans.¹⁹¹ Then in the 1990s, the growing difficulties of the monarchy combined with studies of classical republicanism among political philosophers and intellectual historians, created a strong revival of interest. These historiographical origins have produced two broad approaches.

The first is typified by Antony Taylor, who regards the notion of 'anti-monarchism' as more satisfactory than the term 'republicanism'. In Britain 'republican' has been a 'detached cerebral form' of thought, and one 'more helpful to the defenders of monarchy than to its opponents', because of associations with violence and continental influences. Moreover, except in 1848 and in the aftermath of the Paris Commune, it was hardly present in radical discourses. 'Anti-monarchism', on the other hand, was firmly based in a native British tradition and drew inspiration from the example of Cromwell and the radical critique of 'Old Corruption'. Far from this critique seeming outdated and irrelevant after the government reforms from the 1830s to the 1870s, it acquired new relevance when for the first time it could be applied exclusively to the monarchy.

¹⁸⁸ McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, pp. 14–5.

¹⁸⁹ The death of the Queen Mother saw a spate of such stories, e.g. *Sun*, 3 Apr. 2002.

¹⁹⁰ E.g. N. J. Gossman, 'Republicanism in nineteenth-century England', *International Review of Social History* 7 (1962), 46–60; R. Harrison, *Before the Socialists* (London, 1965), ch. 5; D. Tribe, *President Charles Bradlaugh M. P.* (London, 1971); E. Royle, *Radical Politics, 1790–1900* (London, 1971), and *Radicals, Secularists and Republicans* (Manchester, 1980); F. A. D'Arcy, 'Charles Bradlaugh and the English republican movement, 1868–1878', *Historical Journal* 25 (1982), 367–83.

¹⁹¹ E.g. E. Wilson, *The Myth of British Monarchy* (London, 1989); S. Haseler, *The End of the House of Windsor* (London, 1993).

Taylor's aim is to rehabilitate this submerged current of popular opposition, by taking sensational coverage of royal scandal, extravagance and imperial ambition as serious and effective in conveying 'the hollowness and moral bankruptcy of the Crown'. Most radicals rejected violence, and expected the monarchy simply to fade away in the face of popular education and social advancement. But it remained a stance detached from the Liberal party, expressing a refusal to accept the compromises of the existing party system. Even so, Taylor believes that anti-monarchism 'had a very real meaning for many subjects of the throne', although he is unable to give an estimate of the numbers.¹⁹²

The second approach is that of Eugenio Biagini and Miles Taylor. Biagini is interested in 'cerebral elements' – the influence of classical republican notions of participatory citizenship, civic virtue and concern for the common good, notions not regarded as incompatible with a virtuous constitutional monarch. He argues that both Liberal thinkers and Liberal party followers subscribed to these notions in the 1860s and early 1870s. Working- and middle-class enthusiasm for this form of republicanism was evident in their participation in the Volunteer movement, which enshrined the right of the people to bear arms and 'represented a great democratic symbol, in contrast with the standing army and its aristocratic ethos'.¹⁹³ Biagini does not, though, consider how Liberals reacted to the attacks on Victoria in 1871–2, when her neglect of constitutional duties and alleged appropriation of public money demonstrated a disregard for the common good. Taylor has, however, examined the ideas of the principal Liberal critic in those years, Sir Charles Dilke. Conventionally his attacks on the cost of the monarchy – an enduring preoccupation of anti-monarchists – is treated simply as 'political opportunism', in order to appeal to working-class audiences. Taylor criticizes a concentration on anti-monarchism, arguing for a move beyond 'the fixation with monarchy' to 'recover the broader context of the discourse of republicanism'. In the case of Dilke, this means understanding his view that inevitable laws of social evolution would spread republican governments throughout the world, unless arrested by imperial governments' greed, corruption, creation of bureaucracy and disregard for laws. This, he believed, had

¹⁹² Taylor, *Down*; A. Taylor and L. Trainor, 'Monarchism and anti-monarchism: Anglo-Australian comparisons, c. 1870–1901', *Social History* 24 (1999), 158–73; A. Taylor, 'Medium and messages: republicanism's traditions and preoccupations', and '"The nauseating cult of the Crown": republicanism, anti-monarchism and post-Chartist politics, 1870–5', in Nash and Taylor, *Republicanism*, pp. 1–11, 51–70; idem., 'Republicanism reappraised: anti-monarchism and the English radical tradition, 1850–1872', in J. Vernon (ed.), *Re-reading the Constitution* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 154–78.

¹⁹³ E. F. Biagini, 'Neo-roman liberalism: "republican" values and British liberalism, c. 1860–1875', *History of European Ideas* 29 (2003), 55–72.

happened in Napoleon III's France, and in 1871 he feared the British imperial system would do the same. His republicanism therefore 'arose out of his dislike of imperialism', and his objection to monarchy from its centrality in the British imperial system.¹⁹⁴

A difficulty is that the term 'republicanism' describes a wide range of beliefs; it had a 'protean nature', allowing individuals to change their position 'depending on personal whim or changed political circumstances'.¹⁹⁵ Without the discipline of forming a party and fighting elections, anti-monarchists had little incentive to systematize their thought; Biagini's vision of a seemingly uniformly lofty Liberal rank and file perhaps stretches credibility; and there may have been some distance between what Dilke intended to argue, and how his audience received his arguments. It is plausible that an amalgam of 'anti-monarchical' and 'republican' elements characterized the beliefs of many individuals. Even anti-monarchists could be surprisingly sympathetic to certain royal persons, just as republicans could respect a virtuous monarch. Plunkett, moreover, draws attention to a broader set of cultural and commercial considerations which could produce a similar outcome: *Reynolds's Newspaper*, for example, was in principle anti-royalist, yet indulged in a similar style of reporting the Royal Family in personal terms to that of other newspapers – which helps explain why it achieved a large circulation.¹⁹⁶

As well as producing novel accounts of the early 1870s 'republican moment', recent scholarship has also moved backwards to re-examine Chartism, and forwards to re-examine labour and socialist politics up to 1914. Engels thought that the 'English Chartist is politically a republican' – a view that Antony Taylor strongly and Williams more equivocally re-assert.¹⁹⁷ Paul Pickering, however, has argued that most Chartists were loyal to the monarchy, either because they believed the Queen had the power to help them secure the Charter, or because they understood that she did not.¹⁹⁸ This view would fit more readily with a recent emphasis on the success of the monarchy's 'civic publicness' and 'royal populism' in the 1840s; or it may be that civic leaders felt it their civic duty to greet royal visitors, irrespective of their private beliefs.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ Taylor, 'Republics versus empires', 25, 30–4.

¹⁹⁵ Prochaska, *Republic of Britain*, p. xvi. ¹⁹⁶ Plunkett, *First Media Monarch*, p. 62.

¹⁹⁷ *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, in K. Marx and F. Engels, *On Britain* (Moscow, 1962), p. 265; Taylor, *Down*, ch. 2; Williams, *Contentious Crown*, pp. 16–17.

¹⁹⁸ P. A. Pickering, "'The hearts of the millions': Chartism and popular monarchism in the 1840s", *History* 88 (2003), 227–48.

¹⁹⁹ See Prochaska, *The Republic of Britain*, p. 74, for the case of a Chartist mayor in this position.

Pioneering labour historians detected instances of socialism in republican movements in the 1870s, and anti-monarchism in socialist bodies in the 1890s;²⁰⁰ they judged Keir Hardie's republicanism as 'unfruitful and even damaging to the party';²⁰¹ and they explained the Labour party's acceptance of the monarchy after 1918, by its recognition of the institution's value and a calculation of the practical impossibility of removing or reforming it. More recently Antony Taylor has argued that anti-monarchism influenced Labour pioneers in the 1880s in the context of broader opposition to the aristocracy, land monopoly and hereditary power, but that by 1914 'the oppositional nature of anti-monarchism had driven it outside a Labourism now poised to reap the benefits of power'.²⁰² Neville Kirk's examination of the socialist press broadly supports this view: although principled anti-monarchism continued and developed between 1901 and 1911, it co-existed with widespread *de facto* acceptance of the monarchy and 'in significant but limited, uneven and contested ways, actual support for it'.²⁰³ Mark Bevir, however, argues that the Democratic Federation had a continuing debt to the democratic ideal of 'republican radicals' rather than to an anti-monarchism which not all of them endorsed, and that it was the Labour Party's reliance on ethical socialism and Fabianism which led to its 'uncritical stance towards the state'.²⁰⁴ Future research on the Edwardian period might usefully also consider the republicanism of the suffragettes. They 'sustained a fierce dislike of royal power and authority' and provoked particular opprobrium from George V and Queen Mary.²⁰⁵

There has not yet been thorough published research on the Labour party's attitude towards the monarchy after 1914. Prochaska considers that many Labour MPs were 'theoretical' republicans – favouring abolition of the monarchy in principle, but as practical politicians seeing little advantage in taking up the issue.²⁰⁶ In contrast, Nairn has sketched a bitter and provocative analysis of Labour's thralldom to 'Royal-distributive

²⁰⁰ E.g. H. Pelling, *The Origins of the Labour Party, 1880–1900* (Oxford, 1965), p. 5; C. Tsuzuki, *H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism* (Oxford, 1961), p. 127.

²⁰¹ K. O. Morgan, *Keir Hardie, Radical and Socialist* (London, 1975), pp. 71–3; I. McLean, *Keir Hardie* (London, 1975), pp. 47–9.

²⁰² Taylor, *Down*, pp. 112, 204.

²⁰³ N. Kirk, 'The conditions of royal rule: Australian and British socialist and labour attitudes to the monarchy, 1901–11', *Social History* 30 (2005), 78–83, 87.

²⁰⁴ M. Bevir, 'Republicanism, socialism, and democracy: the origins of the radical left', in Nash and Taylor, *Republicanism*, pp. 73–89.

²⁰⁵ Taylor, *Down*, pp. 204–7; Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, pp. 54–8; Pope-Hennessy, *Queen Mary*, pp. 467–9.

²⁰⁶ Prochaska, *Republic of Britain*, pp. xvi–xvii. For useful comments on Labour observations on the monarchy from the 1880s to 1924, see P. Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack* (Woodbridge, 1998).

Socialism', where the 'Old Regime' resolved the issues of democracy and national identity by creating 'an anti-egalitarian, Royal-family identity'. In comparison, the essence of republicanism and of modern socialism is a 'deep social image of democracy', and confidence about the 'uncrowned democratic dignity and initiative' of the people.²⁰⁷ It is worth noting that the monarchy's relative unpopularity in the 1990s did not create a powerful anti-monarchist movement, but only sporadic, scurrilous spasms of anger.²⁰⁸ Despite speculation that the 'New Labour' government's constitutional ambitions might change the monarchy, Blair has proved as staunchly monarchist as every previous Labour Prime Minister.²⁰⁹

By 2000, the political system as a whole was seen as dysfunctional in a post-industrial society in which 'deference and rigid hierarchy and static social relations' were no longer taken for granted.²¹⁰ This stimulated revived interest in classical republicanism among a few left-wing politicians and intellectuals. David Marquand has produced an incisive analysis of the British political crisis as 'the product of a long-standing contradiction between the promise of democracy and the reality of essentially monarchical power'. The political system is 'predemocratic' in that the executive, to which the Crown's prerogative powers had over centuries been transferred, is not subject to effective parliamentary control of Parliament. Low election turnouts show that the system's legitimacy is draining away, and the only solution is that 'the monarchical culture of government at the centre should be replaced with a republican one'. There are similarities between Marquand's and Nairn's view, yet strikingly for Marquand, reforming the government's 'monarchical culture' appears to entail no reform of the monarchy itself.²¹¹

As well as examining the ideas of republicans, historians also need to study the ideas of monarchists – the articulate, committed ideologues of the institution. It is generally assumed that the meaning of monarchy lies in how it acts, rather than in what it says and what is said and written for it. Only Nairn has rather impressionistically dissected its component claims. As Prochaska has written, 'compared to republican clubs, the

²⁰⁷ Nairn, *Enchanted Glass*, pp. 13, 156, 186–9.

²⁰⁸ Tony Benn's 1992 bill to create a socialist commonwealth, with the Queen replaced by a president elected by MPs, never even came to a vote: Prochaska, *Republic of Britain*, p. 211.

²⁰⁹ *Guardian*, 4, 7 March 1996, 21 Nov. 1997; A. Seldon, *Blair* (London, 2004), p. 287.

²¹⁰ Power Inquiry, *Power to the People* (York, 2006), pp. 18–19, 104–5.

²¹¹ D. Marquand, 'Monarchy, state and dystopia', *Political Quarterly* 76 (2005), 333–6; D. Marquand, *Decline of the Public* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 5–6, and see similarly W. Hutton, *The State We're In* (London, 1995); A. Gamble and T. Wright, 'The future of the monarchy', *Political Quarterly* 74 (2003), 1–3. There have, however, been a few recent proposals for the reform of the monarchy, notably the Fabian Society, *The Future of the Monarchy* (London, 2003).

Constitutional Monarchy Association and the Monarchist League are long lived. And if history is any guide, pure monarchists are, if anything, more inflexible and belligerent than pure republicans, and they might not go quietly'.²¹² If so, it is important to understand not just the ceremonies and the personalities which can inspire such intransigence, but also the ideas. Such a study would chart the origins, evolution and propagation of core monarchist notions. Many have been discussed already in this chapter. Other, more commonplace views are Ivor Jennings's that the 'personification of the State has some psychological effects', such that it is 'easier to put aside our private interests in order to serve the Queen than it is to put them aside in order to serve the State'; Dermot Morrah's view that the Queen is 'the embodiment of the life of the people, so that what is done for her is done for all'; and Arthur Bryant's view that 'the only kind of state in which Englishmen could be happy was that of a constitutional monarchy'.²¹³ The most important has been that the country can be both a democracy and a monarchy. The propagation and reception of monarchist ideas has hardly been studied in any depth; but it should start with a recognition of early socialization into a favourable view of the monarchy.²¹⁴

History is an accumulative discipline, so a future agenda in part consists of more, different, and better research in the areas outlined in this chapter. But one theme has emerged more insistently than others – the incompleteness of a top-down approach. To recover precisely what ordinary people thought about the monarchy at a particular moment in time will no doubt be difficult and often impossible, and the results will more often than not be anecdotal and fragmentary. But historians still need to try, if their claims about public opinion are not to be as tendentious as those of republicans and monarchists themselves.

²¹² Prochaska, *Republic of Britain*, p. 226.

²¹³ I. Jennings, *The Queen's Government* (Harmondsworth, 1954), p. 32; D. Morrah, *The Crown* (London, 1953), p. 32; A. Bryant, *A Thousand Years of British Monarchy* (London, 1975), p. 94.

²¹⁴ For suggestions see e.g. V. Chancellor, *History for their Masters* (Bath, 1970), ; S. Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race* (Toronto, 2000), pp. 78–84; D. Garratt and H. Piper, 'Citizenship education and the monarchy: examining the contradictions', *British Journal of Educational Studies* 51 (2003), 128–48; O. Stevens, *Children Talking Politics* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 21–102, 138–43, 146–7.